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NUN IN RED CHINA

NUN in Red China

Sister Mary Victoria

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Nun in Red China / Sister Mary

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To

THE STAUNCH CHRISTIANS OF CHINA

now following their Leader to Calvary
and the Cross, this book is offered
in humble tribute

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In order to protect Christians now living in China, persons and places are disguised in this book. The incidents are factual. The story as appertaining to the author presents the highlights of the experiences of several Maryknoll Sisters.

ONE

The Dribble and Flood

The refugees came first.

In the morning there was just a dribble of them, but by nightfall a flood of miserable unkempt people, thousands and thousands of them, was surging past our house. All were on foot—of course—but there were some with a cartload of possessions, others with a wheelbarrowful (the middle classes, we called them), and many who had nothing at all but the clothes on their backs and the bundle underarm.

Sister Charlotte treated a good many. They stopped at her dispensary up the road and told her their stories, for she spoke Mandarin. Many had come from far north—Tientsen and Peiping—walking hundreds of miles and leaving behind them in shallow roadside graves those who could not survive. Refugees with malaria, dysentery, and TB, with skin and bone diseases, with burns and broken bones uncared-for; women half-crazed from fright, exposure, malnutrition, and worry—they all turned in to Sister Charlotte.

She fixed them up as best she could, but they would not stay even a day. A day lost might mean the chance for freedom lost.

She enlisted my aid, though all I can do as a nurse is to hold the patient's wrist and offer sympathy. "You can roll bandages, anyhow," she said, "and put some vitamin pills into envelopes for these poor folks."

It was not the first time that either of us had faced refugee lines. Sister Charlotte was in Manchuria for five years before World War II. Her tales of frozen feet and 20-foot snowdrifts gave me chills even in our torrid summer. But those years were the most peaceful of Sister's mission career. They were brought to an end in 1941 by World War II. After a year or so in various internment camps, she was repatriated. In 1946 she went back to Manchuria, but was there hardly six months before she had to evacuate again, this time to Tientsen. After a few months she returned a second time to her little dispensary in Nansan only to have to leave for good in 1948 when Communists took over the city. It was then that she came to South China and was stationed with me in Kwong Do.

Just the two of us Maryknoll Sisters were there. Sister Charlotte conducted a dispensary at the mission center a block or so up the road from our convent; and I was responsible for training some thirty-five women and girls in the religious life. We were building up a congregation of Chinese Sisters who, we hoped, would aid us and eventually replace us in the missions of the district. By 1949 they had already taken over the parish school and had branched out into several villages. If the Red forces held off for another year, we planned that they would be established in a number of others. The Chinese congregation, so to speak, was just coming of age.

I also had seen a bit of upset in my eleven years in China. I left the States in 1938 and came directly to Kwong Do. But right there, in eleven years, I had lived under four different regimes. First, we were under the Nationalists, as China and Japan fought on the coast; then Americans practically took over the town when a large airstrip was built in 1943; next, with a last surge, the Japanese conquered our district and I took to the hill caves for a few months; and then the Nationalists moved in again. But now we were, as we well knew, awaiting the Red rule.

Neither of us felt too apprehensive about another change in

officials. There had been Communist scares for years in China. "After all," I thought, "they are Chinese first and Communist later."

The refugee march snowballed. People fleeing from the North told horrible tales as they went along. People in each succeeding province heard them and joined the parade. And so it went, until you would think that not a soul could be left in North China. Soon, we were seeing people from Wang Ding, the provincial capital city some twenty miles away. Lastly our own neighbors and parishioners started south. Attendance at the parish school dropped from 165 children to 17, and our Chinese Sisters stopped classes. We also closed the small convent boarding school and sent the girls home.

Now and then, honking a path through the rabble, came a battered jeep with an army officer. He was looking for billets for the retreating army, marching inexorably south. The method was simple. As he went through the town, he marked the best buildings with white chalk, putting a simple X on the door. The troops, when they arrived, would take living quarters in such buildings.

I don't know how often our convent was so marked. We kept a lookout at an upstairs window and, each time, as soon as possible, we ran down with a wet cloth and rubbed off the chalk. For one thing, it would be foolish to permit soldiers to stay with unprotected women. For another thing, we were already jammed to the doors; besides the Sisters, we had thirty-five women and their children as refugees in the convent. Small wonder, then, that there were always volunteers to "clean off the blackboard for Sister." An army in retreat is no respecter of persons.

Within a few days, trucks by the hundreds zoomed past; troops by the thousands marched by. The soldiers lived in town, gambling on the streets and spreading discouragement and fear. It was hardly safe to poke one's nose outside the door, and hardly anyone did. Sister Charlotte slipped out the gate each

morning and ran down the street to her clinic; I sometimes ventured to go out the back way and cross the rice fields to visit some family we knew, just to see if they were all right.

A low boom sounded one morning. "That's the Nationalists blowing up the bridge," I said, having known a good deal of bridge blowing five years before. "Now we batten down the hatches and prepare to ride out the storm." The bridge might be gone, but the river was easy to ford during November. I gave them a week or ten days at most.

We had the essentials on hand—rice, peanut oil, and salt. The woodpile, too, had been replenished, and our garden could supply us with greens. Best of all, although the priests did not come for Mass, we had the Blessed Sacrament with us during those tense days.

Have you ever waited to be "liberated" by an incoming army? There is no great suffering to it, but you seem unable to do anything. The whole back of your mind is tied up in one big knot—*when are they coming?* You fiddle with this and with that. You pick something up and put it down again. You get a grip on yourself and sit down to a task you never had time to do before; but you can't do it, even with more leisure time than you ever dreamed you could have.

And the rumors! Everybody coming in from the great silence outside is questioned, "What's happening?" and you get the latest rumors. We heard once that the town jail had been opened and that all the prisoners had been released; seventeen of them were planning to scale the convent walls, murder us all, and live happily ever after on our provender in our good stone house. With the Chinese Sisters and our refugees we kept up a twenty-four-hour lookout, but apparently the seventeen found richer plunder and didn't bother about us.

The quiet was deafening. We seemed to be a household suspended in a void, or hung by a string on a star point and left dangling in nothing at all. Peeking out the windows, we could

see nothing but stillness. Not even a chicken scratched in the road.

There's nothing like routine to keep one steady at such a time. We had a regular round of duties for everybody under the roof and at night we all gathered for Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament. Many a time, two would leave the group to investigate a strange noise—two, because we always went around the big house in pairs.

The night of November 26, a truck came tearing along the deserted road. We could hear it coming a long, long way off, and we froze stiff in our tracks when it ground to a stop right in front of the house. The gate bell clanged. "This is it!" Sister Charlotte said under her breath. "Come on, let's face it," I whispered. "There can't be many; only one truckful." We stole down the stairs and out the door.

In the Orient, a gate is not a little picket affair, placed at the end of the front walk to indicate where guests may enter. No, in China property is surrounded by a stone wall, preferably topped with broken glass. The gate is a substantial wooden construction reinforced with iron and provided with a peephole.

We opened the peephole and were stunned to see a Nationalist soldier's face close to the grill. He spoke with urgency.

"We're three men with our families. Left behind by the rest of the army. Just got a truck this afternoon. No gas for much longer. We three can run off and hide. But what about our women and children?"

We wouldn't let the covered truck drive in, of course. How did we know it was not full of Communists? But in no time at all, three women and some ten children whipped their bedding and extra clothes out of the truck and hurried into our compound. The men roared off into the night.

We never knew what became of them. The women and children were with us until we, too, had to roar off into the night, several months later.

We were very tense—and, I thought, it made us more tense just to sit and think how tense we were. Chinese Sisters and novices, the refugees, and we two Maryknoll Sisters needed some activity, no matter what. So, early next morning we decided to butcher one of our four pigs. It was a community project, all right. Everyone was kept busy heating water, carving up pieces of pork and distributing them fairly, scraping the skin, and conditioning the various parts for their uses. In China, nothing is wasted. Absolutely nothing.

It was about noon when a woman came running into the back yard. "They're here!" she shouted.

In no time at all, every second- and third-floor front window was occupied.

Well-dressed and orderly, marching seven or eight abreast down the road, hour after hour, day after day, the Red Army came in. Every time we thought the last man had passed, a new battalion could be seen raising the dust as it approached.

It was November 27, 1949.

Oddly enough, nobody bothered us for several days. Then one night about ten or twelve young girls in uniform came clanging the gate bell. Two were girls from Kwong Do whom we recognized.

"We are members of the Communist Youth Organization," they said, "and these are our new friends. Don't be afraid, Sisters."

They came in and stood awkwardly in the front hall. They waited for an older, thickset woman to begin.

"Any guns?" she asked.

"No."

"Ammunition?"

"No."

"Where are the men?"

"What men?"

"The running dogs of the imperialists, the men of Chiang's army."

"There are none here."

"We will look, please."

"Certainly."

I tried to keep my face straight as we traversed the house. Our visitors had obviously received the surprise of their lives to find only Sisters and refugee women. They were nice about their search, but they missed not a square inch. The captain was satisfied as we met again at the front door.

"Very good," she commented. And here we heard for the first time: "The People's Government is honest. If anything is broken, it will be replaced, if anything is borrowed, it will be returned."

I heard this so often in the next two years! It became a sort of litany with us, and we chanted it as one by one everything we had was either broken or "borrowed."

"If anything is broken,"

"it will be replaced!"

"If anything is borrowed,"

"it will be returned!"

"The People's Government is honest!"

"Very!"

The captain sent the others outside.

"Foreign Devil," she said, using what was to her the proper word for a foreigner, "may I please take a bath here?" Her search of the house had revealed the makeshift shower one of the priests had installed for us. It was rigged up with a 5-gallon kerosene tin and rubber tubing, and the operation was complicated. First, you filled a big wooden bucket with water, heated over the stove, of course. Then you pulled a rope through a pulley and thus raised the bucket. You tipped the bucket with a pole and let the water run through holes in the bottom of the tin. The water drained off the cement into a trough which emptied right outside through a hole in the building wall. A wonderful bit of Yankee ingenuity.

I looked at the valiant captain, and pitied her. Poor woman! She had been on the march for days; the contraption must have been tempting. "Go ahead," I said.

The other girls, too, had used their eyes well. The next day, one by one, they came for a bath. Then a few took to coming as often as four times in one day and we had to say "No."

In those days, you could still say "No."

TWO

Easy Times

Easy times? You will wonder why we called them so. I wonder myself, now.

Kwang Do had been "liberated." Many families moved back into town. Our refugees, too, had to scratch out a living some way and they left us, one by one. The town was fairly normal. Maybe the scramble for the next bowl of rice was a bit more hectic, the street gambling more riotous, travel more restricted, and the police more nosey, but life went on.

A couple of weeks after "liberation," we heard firing of some sort off in the direction of the hills. An hour or so later, a hubbub came swirling down the road. A party of Nationalist soldiers and their families, it seems, had hidden in a cave with food supplies for a year. They were easily smoked out with hand grenades and now the Reds were bringing their captives into town. We glimpsed them as they passed—beaten, bloody, naked, and roped together.

That evening Lao Tze, our cook, reported. "Three bodies are up. A man, woman, and child are hanging in the market place. You know those high poles near the slaughtering field? That's where they are."

I saw them myself the next day; that is, I didn't actually see the bodies but the swarms of flies around them. They stayed there about a week.

The hint was well taken; Kwang Do was peaceful.

We had an official visit from the powers that be. They were polite but quite pointed.

"Does the new regime please your honorable self?"

"Are you in sympathy with the People's Government?"

We slipped out of the simple traps. "The civil government is entitled to respect."

"You are to continue your work," and No. 1 Man rose to leave. "The People's Government permits freedom of religion. We are here to protect you."

They worked harder protecting us than the devil himself would to harm us! Every five days or so, at first, they dropped in just to see if we were all right—usually at mealtime. Several times, photographers came along to take pictures of how and what we ate.

Soon the rate of solicitude was stepped up. Our kind protectors came around every day; then, at every meal or shortly thereafter. Next, they took to dropping around at midnight as well. We were likely to smother under such kindness.

In spite of it, Christmas of 1949 was wonderful. God knew what was going to happen, of course, so He let this last Christmas be everything a missioner could want. This is like Him, I've found—a bit of Divine niceness. He assumes our minor virtues —the little things that make it a joy to live with someone—as well as those titanic virtues that only the great saints possess.

Families from far out in the country came to celebrate the feast. We put them up in the empty rooms and they pitched camp all over the garden. Every Christian near the Church threw open his home to guests. It meant something to come 20 miles in times like those, but come they did. Six hundred Catholics chanted the prayers aloud at Midnight Mass.

Among other things, the annual Christmas play was our responsibility. On Christmas Eve we opened to a packed house. Mamas and papas thrilled to see their Precious Jade or Lotus Blossom come on stage with paper wings. The simple curtains,

the tinseled angel gowns, the scenery painted on corrugated paper—these were theatrical magic. And oh, that marvelous kerosene spotlight concocted from an ancient lantern-slide projector my grandfather had had at home!

The audience sat enthralled on benches in the brick-paved room. I looked at their feet, chapped from wind and water. Most of our Christians are "boat people," living, working, bearing children, and dying on their tiny sampans. Winter and summer, they are more in the water than on it, constantly jumping in to beach their boats or to disentangle a river traffic jam. I love these people with an almost envious love. Their faith and fortitude are, I think, beyond my attaining.

Sister Charlotte touched my arm. "The gate bell is ringing." We slipped out of the room.

Another little play—comedy thriller—began.

The two of us were face to face with the business end of two revolvers thrust through the peephole. "Here we go!" Sister whispered.

"Open the gate!" came a command, as over the wall we heard the shuffling of hundreds of soldier feet.

We did, of course.

I don't know who were more surprised, we or they. Only ten or so soldiers marched in; we had expected a full division at least. But the leader's face when he saw us was really comic. He had expected to loot a rich farmer, but his revolvers had so stuffed the peephole that he could not see who we were.

A stunned moment and then, "This is your place?" he asked.

"We live here. It belongs to the Catholic mission."

Plainly, he wanted to get away without international complications.

"We, ah, . . . we, ah . . . want some flowers. You have a large place here; probably you have some flowers you can give us."

Flowers at Christmas time! Sister Charlotte broke in. "You don't mean real ones, of course. I'll get you some flowers."

In a second she was gone; in another, she was back with a bunch of artificial lilies. St. Joseph had worn them on his staff for many a Christmas past.

"Here's what you want," she said cheerfully as she waved him gently along to the gate. "Now you can all go!" With our sweetest smiles still beaming on them they passed through the gate and then found themselves outside with the gate locked behind them.

We went back to watch Precious Jade and little Lotus Blossom bring their lambs to the Christ Child while St. Joseph stood by, minus his lilies.

Having gained admittance once, the soldiers tried again. In a few days, our friends were back.

"Our chicken flew over your wall. We will come in and find it."

"What color was it? A rooster or a hen? Any special marks? We will find it for you."

There was a nebulous description; we found no such bird, of course.

Next, they had to graze their horses, or get water from our well, or, often, find a ball or something else which came accidentally over the wall. We had to say "No," but keep our manners as well.

Sister Charlotte went to the dispensary as usual in those days, but the place was a beehive of Red soldiers. They hung around laughing and talking—and watching.

"They recognize my Manchurian accent," she told me. "They seem to like it, but I can't tell how they really feel."

A few days later, she said, "I went to see poor sick Lon Fu again this afternoon. My entourage of Red soldiers came along as usual. Mrs. Lon gave them tea. While they were busy over it, Lon asked me not to come any more. 'Those men came back after you left yesterday,' he said. 'They asked all about you. They're trying to get me to say that your medicine isn't any good. If I die, mark me, you'll be blamed for it.' "

I cocked an eye, and we both thought it fantastic. But after several similar incidents we gave up house visiting.

In April the dispensary was closed and we all moved to Wang Ding, provincial capital and diocesan seat. In this or another large city, where there were many foreigners, we hoped to get away from the pestiferous police and soldiers. Besides, it was cheaper. Sister Charlotte and I moved in with the two Maryknoll Sisters stationed at Wang Ding, Sister Charity, a doctor, and, Sister Alice Ann, a catechist. The tiny convent was bursting its walls, but the very closeness was strengthening.

Three of the Chinese Sisters were sent off to Macau to study; others stayed at their mission stations; a few took over a small house across the alley from us.

That alley! It rejoiced in the title of "Never-Gets-Dry Alley." A truer name was never given. The public well was at one end of it and, day and night, water carriers sloshed back and forth. Heavy wooden buckets jiggled at the ends of their springy bamboo shoulder poles and spilled water at every step. No puddle ever had a chance to dry up. Only 8 feet wide, with buildings rising on either side, the cobblestones of Never-Gets-Dry Alley never knew what the sun looks like.

On the right of us was a bride with chronic and loud mother-in-law trouble. On the left was a three-story building—barracks for five thousand soldiers.

We moved into the tempo of a city in terror.

In our little village of Kwang Do, three bodies in the market place had quelled any political debate. Wang Ding needed more. Two or three times a week executions took place. On Stalin's birthday, we had twenty. One day there were sixty. They were public affairs. Very.

The execution ground was a cemetery not far from our convent, and when we saw a crowd pushing through the puddles in our alley we knew what to expect. They were sullen crowds, not at all in holiday mood. True enough, they yelled *"Sa tow!*

[Kill!]" at the signal of leaders placed throughout, but there was no thrill to it.

Loudspeakers were set up to broadcast the screams of the tortured, but they were turned off if the accused protested his innocence. Hung up by the toes or fingers, the victims screamed, cried, blubbered, and were silent at last. Those beaten to death yelled at every lash. Only after long torture was anyone shot or hanged. The three stages of communism, people said (behind their hands, of course), were:

"Kowtow" (very polite)
"Yaotow" (I forbid!)
"Sa tow" (Kill!)

All were not Nationalist soldiers who died. Many were ex-government employees—postmasters, telegraph men, utility workers, bank employees. If persons like these had not prudently dashed into Communist Party uniforms within a few days after liberation, they were in for it.

Conscripting an audience was well organized. The city was divided into sections and each section took its turn in providing a crowd. Every house had to send somebody. "The People's Government forces no one," our neighborhood No. 1 Man said in stentorian voice. "Everybody must come willingly." We sent Na Fu, our cook, who put cotton in her ears first. She had to go to a rehearsal the evening before. It was almost funny—to rehearse for an execution—but we could not smile, somehow.

Poor Na Fu! She had no peace. The rule was that no one might hold a job without being indoctrinated. Therefore, three times a week, her evenings were spent at Communist meetings and classes, or else No. 1 Man in our neighborhood came around to ask why. Before long, the meetings were called at odd hours. Just as she was cooking dinner, she would have to drop everything and go. Or when she had just put her weary bones to rest for the night, up she must get. The fine was a cup of peanut oil for playing hookey. She had to learn new songs, new yells, new dances.

She came home one night, clearly aghast. "That water woman three doors down the alley, she told me tonight that soon all women will have to wear their hair short. It's economical. Long hair takes too much of the workers' time; the People's Government won't permit it."

"And if you don't—?" I asked her.

"Well, some say the penalty will be a forfeit of 3 pounds of rice; but others tell me it will be prison for fifteen years. *Ay yan!* How can I face my ancestors with short hair!"

But she cut it, nevertheless, merely on a rumor's say-so. So did nearly every other woman in Wang Ding. The rule was never officially promulgated; the rumor was enough to effect the change.

She was worn out. She had to go to neighborhood meetings, to union meetings, to executions, to welcomes for General This or That. She had to bone up for examinations in Marxism. On top of that were the sleepless nights, for, when Na Fu was only too glad to tumble into bed, young folks paraded through the streets singing the new songs, dancing in wooden cloppers, and beating the new Russian-style drums.

Na Fu was fed up with it all. She didn't mind saying so—at home. "No time to eat! Yell this! Sing that! Traipse around in parades! Rah, rah, rah! The People's Government makes me ten thousand times happy! And worst of all, my hair! Just wait until my mother-in-law sees me in heaven, cropped like this. They'll dance pretty, then, or I don't know my old Wong Pac Me!"

Na Fu's grandchildren in the Star of the Sea parish school had their troubles, too, and so did Father Donlon, the pastor, and all his teachers. For the most part this was a splendid group of young men, some Catholic, some not, all of high caliber.

When the Reds had come in in November, a big educational meeting was called. "You must weed out the old China from your textbooks," the educators were told. Chinese education had always stressed character formation; it was to be replaced by the "new man."

Furthermore, "You are no longer in positions of authority. Administration will be in the hands of a committee comprised of representatives of students, faculty, and hired help."

And the curriculum was fixed. "Songs, dances, speeches, and plays are of prime importance. The time allowed for classroom work must be spent on official texts. No room for debate on those!"

The textbooks were revised. Two of our teachers served on a committee for the revision. Besides rewriting the entire texts, they had to pound them out on a mimeograph machine (the only one in town, borrowed from our school). Only two of a big committee, our teachers could do little to stem the tide on the textbook revision, and they were forced to slave over that mimeograph machine, eighteen hours a day for two weeks, making up texts for every pupil in the city.

GEOGRAPHY: The Soviet bloc spread over the face of the earth.

HISTORY: Concentrated on the Chinese proletariat, Mao Tse-tung, Tchou Tet, Tchou En Lai, and Liou Chao I'i plus the Russian Revolution.

BIOLOGY: Mendel was a mythologist. Lysenko's cut-to-pattern theories were correct.

RELIGION: There is no God; man has no soul; afterlife is only a myth.

SCIENCE: Everything from the steam engine to atomic fission was invented by Russians.

POETRY: Love odes to Stalin, epics on the rise of the proletariat, and sonnets to the "future victory." We laughed aloud at one poem, "Views from the Empire State Building," with the explanation that the Soviets would occupy it within the next three years.

ART: Red stars and hammer and sickle replaced birds and flowers, the staples of Chinese art. An all-time low!

Father had a quiet little conference with his faculty. They broached the idea: "Let's sabotage the whole program as much as we can!"

The result was entirely too good. Within three weeks the enrollment at Star of the Sea School had doubled. Nobody could miss the reason. The Communists started to get even, and notes came to Father from the Wang Ding school supervisor.

"The children in your school have been chosen as demonstrators in a civic program of Keep Our Streets Clean. Please release them for the next week for this work."

"Rehearsals for Freedom Program on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday."

". . . parade to airport to welcome Honorable So-and-So."

"Teachers of Star of the Sea School will spend four nights a week reading Communist doctrine books to illiterates."

"Please erect a bulletin board outside the school. Teachers and children are to clip newspapers and post photos."

"Your teachers will conduct an evening school several nights a week."

"The next three weeks, all pupils are to report for planting and care of spring crops; practical work in agriculture."

The Youth Corps buzzed around continually. Composed of young government men, farmers, students, and workers, it was a sort of novitiate or trying ground for the Party. If good, they were promoted to be real, grown-up Communists. They tried hard to be good. They supervised their neighbors and spied on us in the church. Often they walked into the classrooms and dragged the children off "to paste posters on the city walls," or "to go to a meeting, or parade, or rehearsal."

In the spring of 1950 a Children's Corps was started. Poor Father threw up his hands. He found one youngster assigned to report his Sunday sermons and another deputed to spy on the catechism class. The last straw for Star of the Sea School came during the summer vacation when Father got wind of what was in store for the fall term. Six of our teachers would be sent to other schools, to be replaced with six stalwart members of the Youth Corps.

The next day, a particularly pestiferous Youth Corps fellow

started looking over the desks in the teachers' room, choosing one for himself.

"You had better take your stuff out of this desk," he told the teacher sitting at it. "I'll be moving in in two days."

He never did—there's some satisfaction in that! Father applied immediately to the Government for permission to close the school. It was granted within twenty-four hours.

One less headache for Father; one more for Na Fu.

"I told my son to teach the children at home," she declared. "Better to learn nothing than to prate lies." But he didn't get away with it, of course. The neighborhood "checker-upper" collected a pint of kerosene for every day they missed school. After that, it was best to keep one's mouth closed when little Silver Waterlily and his big sister Peacock Cloud were around. S-s-s-sh!—little pitchers have big ears and they were instructed to use them at home. "Do your parents eat more meat than is recommended by the Government?" teacher would ask, dangling high marks before her little detectives.

You never knew who was spying, for practically everyone was encouraged in this activity. On the streets, one talked in very loud tones just to prove that the conversation was not subversive. Indeed, by the end of 1950, the city officials of Wang Ding put out a new regulation: "Anyone seen talking in whispers to one or more persons on the street, makes himself liable to the charge of subversive activities."

A newspaper feature series raised my ire each morning. The title was "Glorious Heroes" and here is a sample:

I DENOUNCE MY FATHER AS UNDESERVING OF THE NAME

"Formerly I admired my father. He gave me a good education. He was kind to my mother and the whole family. Even our servants were happy.

"But I realize now that he had money. Therefore, he oppressed the people for he owned more land than others in our town.

"I hate my father now. My love has turned to loathing. He

ought to be punished severely. I will aid in punishing him, for this is my patriotic duty."

Have you ever lived in a "state-supersedes-God" atmosphere? You feel that each day is twenty-four hours of Eliza crossing the ice. There is no firm footing of friendship, loyalty, family solidarity, honorable dealing. You never know who may be informing against you at any moment.

In Wang Ding, we all were urged to confess our past crimes, to "wash ourselves white" as the Communists phrase it. Anyone could confess, especially if he had some tidbit of information about somebody else. All the old grudges got an airing: employees could ruin the boss; a cranky wife could work out her spite; the family ne'er-do-well could come out on top after all. Such loyalty to the People's Government was well rewarded.

Na Fu summed it up in one of her tirades: "Ten years ago you had words with your neighbor for stealing bananas off your tree. So now you're accused to the Government and you get hung up by your toes!"

Landowners suffered most. Tai Mei [Elder Sister] was the widow of the oldest brother of a large family. The lands had been in his name and left to his small son, but Tai Mei was administrator. However, the whole family worked the farm together amicably; certain portions were parceled off to one or another by common consent. But now one of the brothers saw a golden opportunity.

When the police were through with her, Tai Mei had left just what the Government considered necessary for one person with one child—one chair, two bowls, two pairs of chopsticks, a comforter, and a corner of one room in her own house. A crock in which she stored her rice was a luxury, they said, and took it away. Her month's supply of rice was left scattered all over the floor with absolutely nothing to keep it in.

Mou Fok, a young man recently married, wasn't a landowner but his brother was. Since the brother was already in prison,

Mou Fok was hauled in his stead before the People's Meeting out in the cemetery one day.

"What is the People's pleasure in regard to this vile brother of a landowner?" yelled the People's judge.

The case was too thin even for the New China. The most the instigators could get from the crowd was, "Beat him!"

It was done. Afterward, Mou Fok brought his bleeding back to us in the dispensary, but he would not go home to his bride.

"This isn't the end," he said. "It never is. They'll be coming back to get me and they will involve her, too. Better, that I start the trek to Hong Kong. I've sent word for her to try to meet me there." He had no travel permit, of course. There were months of travel by night and hiding by day before him.

I wonder if they ever saw each other again.

One evening in July, 1950, some sodality girls came to visit. As we sat in the small garden, they nudged each other. "You ask them!" "No, you ask them!"

At last the story came out. At the neighborhood meeting the night before (a pound of rice, if you weren't present!) the leader had told them all about America:

"In America there is a great long street called Wah Street [Wall Street]. It stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. There are fifty-seven families living on Wah Street, very rich and very mean. They eat meat every day—a whole pig for breakfast, a whole pig for dinner, and a whole pig for supper. And lots of rice cooked fresh every meal.

"These fifty-seven families cannot possibly eat all that food themselves. Do they give the leftover food to their servants? No! What do they do with it then? They dump it into the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, whichever is nearer. They carry it past their hungry servants and throw it away. Such is the condition of a capitalistic country!"

Was it true, the girls wanted to know.

I was dumfounded! Sister Charity, the doctor, soon found her tongue. She is from New York.

"What would you think," she asked, "if I told you that I have walked from the beginning to the end of Wall Street many times? It is a very short street. What is more, there isn't a single family living on Wall Street. There are only office buildings, banks, and commercial houses."

This extraordinary yarn was the first gun fired in the "Hate America!" campaign in our district. The Communists knew that they must introduce a new bugaboo. Too many people were beginning to look back on the Nationalists with a bit of nostalgia, comparing the obvious faults of Chiang's regime with worse ones of Mao's. The local Politburo was glad to put up a new target.

In no time, the city walls were decorated with pictures of American soldiers bayoneting women. Newspapers took up the hue and cry. Americans were perpetrating atrocities in Korea. All American children were jittery pieces of humanity and most were mental cases. American politics were fantastically rotten. Everybody hated the President. Our moral stature had sunk to unplumbed depths. Anti-American songs resounded down Never-Gets-Dry Alley until we too had memorized them. Anti-American slogans were plastered everywhere.

Sister Alice Ann went to the rice merchant for our month's supply of rice one day in September. One had to sign and countersign innumerable pieces of paper to get rice. On the back of all this paper was stamped: "Down with American imperialism!"

"The merchant apologized as he gave it to me," she said. "He spoke out of the side of his mouth. 'Don't believe it. We have not forgotten the food America sent us during the war. Why should we start hating you all of a sudden?' "

Another day, an old woman came to Sister Charity's clinic. Sister did her best for her; she was a long-time patient, though not a Christian, and Sister liked to joke a little with her while treating her.

"Ten thousand thanks," the old woman said.

"Why should you thank an American devil, Vong Pac Me?" Sister teased her.

"Ay!" the old lady stamped her foot. *"They're* the ones who don't like you! The people love you." And she rushed from the clinic as if a thousand prying ears had heard her say it.

We did not wait long for results of the "Hate America" campaign. We had serenaders, mostly young hoodlums recruited from schools, so far as we could judge. Probably this was their homework for the night.

Bricks, mud, and filth plastered the house front by morning. The five thousand soldiers in the barracks next door amused themselves by spitting down on us. The Youth Corps took to limbering up their pitching arms by throwing rocks through the windows, and many were quite accurate. We ran, several times in the night, from dormitory to refectory and finally to the hall, where we finished the night far from the windows.

We had the pleasure of meeting our midnight serenaders soon. A thousand boys and girls had been brought from country towns (where parents might exert a softening influence) to a Communist indoctrination school a block away. These were the "hope of the Communist future." They soon discovered us. Their free time (about four hours daily) was spent on our front step, in our garden, on our porch. They yelled the anti-American songs and shouted the slogans. They often pounded on the door for entrance but, thank God, the locks held.

THREE

One Jump Ahead

We were always just one jump ahead of the police. They came around to see us often—sometimes every day for a week; sometimes only once a week; sometimes several times in one day. And they never left without a generous assignment of busywork.

"Make a list of every object in each room giving location, size, quality, age, and price, when new."

On the next visit, the squad checked each object, against the reported location.

"Bed? Here! Correct. Two sheets (such luxury!). One blanket, old. Spread, mended. Quite correct!" And on through the house. Broom behind the door? Toothbrush on shelf? Four cups, five rice bowls, four spoons, four pairs chopsticks on table?

"Shoes on feet, hankie in pocket, and denture in mouth? Quite correct!" mimicked Sister Alice Ann in whispers.

We trailed them around the house, feeling that we had covered the situation in good detail. Then Inspector Generalissimo saw a small tin can on a window sill, one of those small condensed-milk tins. Sister Alice Ann prided herself on having "a green thumb," and she had planted a sprig of rosebush trying to get it to root.

"What's this?"

"Just an old tin can, Your Honor." Sister leaped to the defense of her plant.

"I don't see it listed. Are you hiding things from us?"

"Hiding! No, it's right there on the window sill. It's not worth listing."

"The People's Government will be the judge of that, foreign woman. Your part is to list everything. Are other objects concealed also?"

Of course there were! We had all sorts of "hidden treasures"—three old bottles in the back yard and a half-cake of soap near the wash basin. They were all solemnly marked down.

In a few weeks, we were checked once again. Bed, here; chopsticks, on the table; tin can, on the window sill. Then—

"A chair is gone! Foreign woman, where is the chair that should be in this corner?"

"Oh we took it into the next room, Inspector. We need it more there than in here," we explained easily.

But that was wrong, too. We should have applied for permission for such a transfer. Another time we killed a chicken for dinner. Another crime against the People.

But worst of all was what we called the Back-and-Forth Bicycle Incident.

We had once owned a bicycle; it was in the days when we could go freely from village to village teaching the Catholic Faith. But several months before all this listing was required, we had sold the bicycle for food. Our money was frozen in the bank, and we needed food. All of a sudden, the assistant chief inspector remembered that bicycle.

"I do not see your bicycle," he said. "Where is it?"

"You are right," Sister Charity said. "We no longer have a bicycle. We sold it."

"Whom did you sell it to? What is his clan?"

"I do not know; I cannot remember the name of his clan."

"Very strange! You sell a bicycle and cannot remember the buyer. He must be a Catholic. Where does he live?"

"He used to come to church, but not any more. I am not sure

just where he lives. We call him A Lung but I do not know his clan name."

"Tell us the name of that man or you will go to jail."

"I tell you the truth; I do not know his name. If I must sit in jail for this, I'll sit."

The assistant chief inspector tried another tack. "Who was the middleman?"

"There was no middleman."

"Whoever heard of selling a bicycle without a middleman! I'll give you two days to get me that man's name."

"Can do. You come here and get it."

He was jolted. He expected her to walk to the police station and turn it in. "I come here to get?"

Sister looked at him steadily. "Yes, you come here."

He hesitated and then nodded his head.

The squad was hardly out of the house before Na Fu was leaping to the rescue. "I know where A Lung lives," she said. "I'll go to him and tell him all about it."

"How can you, Na Fu?" Sister Charity was worried. "You will need a travel permit to get to the village."

"I have relatives there. No one will know my real reason."

She was out of the house in no time, splashing purposefully through the puddles of Never-Gets-Dry Alley. For an old lady, Na Fu could move fast.

That night, slipping through the city sentries, she came back with the wife of A Lung. We held a midnight conference. A Lung himself had gone to Canton and was not expected back for several days. The poor wife was alarmed.

"Don't tell his name, Sister!" she pleaded. "It means jail. Take the bicycle back and say nothing about my husband."

"Even if we do that," we reasoned, "the police will put us in jail because we cannot explain how it returned."

"Oh no, they won't!" Na Fu and the woman were wiser in these things than we were. "You will make a present of it to the

assistant chief inspector. That's what he wants. You will see, give him the bicycle and nothing will come of the affair."

"But we aren't able to pay you back the food that A Lung gave us for it."

His wife laughed. "That's nothing! We would pay that ten times over to save him from jail."

It was agreed. Now, we could only pray that A Lung could get that bicycle back to us before Mr. Assistant Chief Inspector came around again.

Our guardian angels took over from there on, for the inspector went on a spree the next day and did not recover from his headache for five days. We gave him the bicycle and, oddly enough, at the same time he decided to show clemency to poor ignorant foreign devils.

The affair was galling because, while it was now illegal for anyone to buy a foreigner's possessions, this ruling had not been announced in the newspapers until July 28. The bicycle sale took place on July 8, nearly three weeks before that date. Yet everybody involved in the incident knew that a technicality such as that would mean nothing in the People's Court.

Well, once more we breathed! We were still a jump ahead of the police.

I was mending my clothes one day at the sewing machine. Our things were falling apart with nothing to replace them. Patch on patch, and darn over darn, could hardly keep them together.

Suddenly a detachment of soldiers stopped dead in front of the house, listened for a moment, and then pounded on the door. We opened to drawn bayonets and stood aside quickly as they swarmed through the house. The leader stayed with us, covering us with two revolvers.

"Machine guns!" he said. "You are hiding war materials."

We were not greatly perturbed for we knew we had nothing. Sure enough, the men soon came back from ransacking every corner and drawer. They had found nothing.

"What was that noise?" he asked. "We heard a machine gun just now."

"Was it this?" and I ran the sewing machine for a few stitches. It was. (From this, you can judge something of the age of our sewing machine!) Our friends departed in a hurry.

The old radio was a constant menace. It wouldn't work, and for more than a year it had reposed high on a shelf in the closet, companion to mops and brooms and leaky buckets. We were always hoping that some Maryknoll padre would get around to fixing it for us.

The local police were sure that this decrepit piece was a secret connection with the White House. They accused us of tying the missions together by secret radio. And there was nothing we could do to get rid of it. If we sold it, the buyer would be jailed. We couldn't give it away for nobody wanted it. If we threw it into the river, then certainly it was a spy piece. We would have been glad to chop it up for kindling wood, but that would require permission from the police. Were they foolish enough to let us destroy valuable evidence?

The best we could do was to go through something like this at every inspection.

"You are sending secret messages to America on this."

"It won't even work, Inspector. It is a thing of no value."

"Of no value? Then, why do you keep it?"

"Because we cannot get rid of it."

"You mean, you do not *want* to get rid of it, because you are sending messages to Washington on it."

"Inspector, if you can get Washington on that radio, we will be glad to go to jail as spies."

He drew himself up. "I do not descend to operating the gimcracks of your despicable country."

And there the matter would rest until the next time.

Nevertheless, we kept up the normal work of the mission as far as possible so as to be of service to the people as long as we could. Each morning, Sister Charity and Sister Charlotte went

off to the dispensary and the other two, Sister Alice Ann and I, taught classes in religion, either in the house or in nearby villages. We did not attempt to stay overnight anywhere; this restricted us to places within five miles. We walked, of course. On our diet, ten miles a day, plus teaching, was plenty to do.

Doctor and nurse found a rushing business every day at the dispensary. The line lengthened through the months as people got poorer and poorer. Everybody in town, it seemed, wanted us to clear up their troubles.

We paid no attention to the political stripe of the patients. Indeed, we spent much of our available funds to buy medicines because each patient seemed too needy to turn away. Those who could pay anything gave us a token payment—an egg, a few sticks for fuel, a bunch of vegetables. But most could give only gratitude.

Even the Communists came, not the important ones, of course, but rank and file of the soldiers and small-time Party members. Futhermore, they brought their prisoners to us for treatment.

I happened to be at the dispensary one afternoon helping to make up doses of pills for common ailments, when a clanking of chains was heard through the window. Sure enough, there were four guards lounging around while several prisoners waited patiently in the line-up. They dragged their leg irons along the concrete paving at every step. Poor fellows! I pitied them, little thinking that I would be in their shoes before I left China.

I like to think we treated those prisoners well. Well-educated, polite, grateful, patient, they were splendid Chinese. They worked in the hot sun from six in the morning until six at night with only a quarter-hour rest at noon. If sickness overtook them, they were fined 2,500 Communist dollars a day. Any day that they failed to drag themselves to work, they were really down and out.

They were guilty of nothing more than that they had been penmen in some office under the old regime, or that they had been educated enough to speak their minds intelligently against

the new one. In the months ahead, many Catholic priests and catechists would join their ranks.

The Communists reasoned at first, "Let the American foreign devils continue in this medical work. If the people are healthy, they can work all the harder for us!"

But soon it was obvious to them that the dispensary was building up good will for the Church. The persecution began with paper work.

"List all supplies, all equipment.

"List all personnel with Chinese names, American names, parents, grandparents, education, schools, degrees, grading, etc., etc.

"List source of each box of pills, price you paid, or person who gave it to you. Whom did you dispense it to? Name? Address? Ailment? Frequency of visits?"

When you go through this rigmarole for 6,910 patients in a month, you are pretty tired of doing homework for the People's Government. But we got through it all and felt rather proud of ourselves as we handed it over the police desk.

"Ho!" said the sergeant, ruffling through the onionskin. "Only one?" Our hearts sank.

"Make it up again in triplicate!"

That was done. Then, "This is in Chinese. You must make also a copy in English."

And on. And on. And on.

The inventory frenzy was epidemic. You went to market. You looked over the meager selection of food—buffalo meat, noodles, taro, a few greens, heavy dark flour in which the lumps heaved and wiggled when disturbed, and a few chunks of the native sugar, dark brown stuff oozing stickiness and covered with flies. You selected the day's menu. Then the fun began.

The market woman pulled out a brush and a Chinese ink block. Name? Address? Nationality? Price of article? Where did you get the money to pay for it?

In my high school days back in La Crosse, Wisconsin, I used

to take a summer job in a grocery store. I thought it quite complicated to operate the cash register; I used to stand up on a chair to punch all the numbers. If we had ever been required to go through all this every time we sold a box of Jello, I'm sure the books would never have come out even at the end of the month.

And yet, here were these poor, ignorant farm women trying to keep track of every nickel's worth of buffalo meat. I would not like to try getting their figures to balance! They didn't like the paper work any more than we did, but we went through the motions with every purchase.

The menu wasn't so bad. We could get ducks and chickens on big feast days. We made bread, using water instead of milk, after we had carefully picked out the livestock from the flour. However, it turned sour if not eaten immediately; we found this out the hard way, after several of us got violent stomach-aches from soured corn bread. We burned peanuts to a dark brown, ground them, and put them into cakes as "chocolate." We also burned and ground beans, and told ourselves that the brew made from them tasted like coffee. For a month, we ate papaya for breakfast, dinner, and supper; there didn't seem to be another fruit in all South China.

In those months, I lost twenty pounds.

Our five thousand neighbors-in-uniform next door, besides spitting on us from the upper barracks windows, soon acquired souvenirs from the various farms they had inspected—pigs, chickens, ducks. The poultry caused us no trouble for they were soon roasting merrily over an open fire, but the pigs were kept for a while until they could grow up. What better place to build a pigpen than in the foreign devils' back yard! The open toilets, too, were built as close to us as possible.

It was bad, of course, but we had front seats for some of the private life of the People's Army. Every evening the soldiers were arrayed for Nightly Examination of Conscience. The sergeant got up and faced the troops.

"I must ask you boys to criticize me. Tell me what I have done against the People today."

Silence. (Of course!)

"Was I proud, today? Did I place myself above any of you Comrades?"

"No!"

"Did I eat better food than you?"

"No!"

"Was I unjust to any one of you?"

"No!"

"I have criticized myself and I apologize for anything I have done against the Comrades. Now you accuse yourselves. Who has done wrong today?"

A stupid collection of peccadillos was revealed.

"I overslept fifteen minutes this morning."

"I thought proud thoughts."

"I sinned against the Government by not informing on my Comrade for his own good."

Everybody forgave everybody most beautifully. Then came the speech of the evening.

"Look at these American imperialists next door! They came to our glorious China to teach religion but they are spies and imperialists. They eat out of cans; our fresh vegetables and pork are not good enough for them. They eat bread because they despise our rice." The subject veered to the U.S. Army.

"America has opened her jails and sent the scum of humanity to murder and rape the Korean people. The United Nations Army is a bunch of drafted good-for-nothings. On the battlefield, they are only paper tigers. Our Chinese soldiers see them and call 'hensao [Hands up!].' Then the no-goods throw down their arms and yell 'Okay.' These two English words you must learn well, hensao and okay."

To say the truth, we pitied the young soldiers. Small groups came over to look at us with more curiosity than hatred. From

what they said to each other, and sometimes to us, it was obvious why they had enlisted. High taxes had taken most of the available rice from their farming families. If the older brother went into the army, there would be more food for the others. In town meetings, every youngster was reminded of his duty to volunteer. Nagging, and the hope that he could better his family, pushed a boy into Uncle Joe's service. Sons who had gone to Korea more than a year earlier had not been heard from. The Communist Army wastes no money on army post offices. It is a part of the Party line to "break up the family unit."

Religious persecution began in low key and mounted high during 1950. I first met it, oddly enough, in the Village of One Hundred Peacefulnesses.

The women here had asked for instruction in the Faith for some time, so I cleared with all officials concerned and went to live in the town for two weeks. Thirty-five women were waiting to register as I entered the town after a 10-mile hike. This was a royal welcome and warmed my heart. We went through the morning lesson quickly.

Just as we finished, six armed Communists appeared at the door.

"Come outside," they said. I did.

"You are not wanted in this village," they informed me. "You had better plan to return home this afternoon."

"But I was invited to come," I protested. "I won't go home until you can give me a written order from the village mandarin."

By this time, the villagers had gathered round.

"She is right," they had the nerve to tell the Communists. "We did invite her."

Things went along fine for a day or so. Then, a young Communist woman was sent to the village of One Hundred Peacefulnesses to teach singing and dancing. Her classes were at the same time as mine, of course.

"What shall we do, Kou Niong?" the women asked.

"Well, it's obvious to me," I answered. "We have always heard that communism preaches freedom. So you are free to attend either class. Go to hers if you wish; come to mine, if you wish."

The next day, the Communist teacher slipped into my classroom during the noon hour and tore the crucifix from the wall. "She cannot be a good Communist," I said to the women, "for we are always hearing that Communists do not touch or ruin other people's property."

A day or so later, she was at it again. "Your classes interfere with the Government's instruction," she said to me.

"True," I commented.

"This must not be. The women have signed up for dancing and singing instruction."

"If that is so, then they should be urged to attend."

At the class that afternoon, I announced, "Anyone who has signed up for dancing or singing lessons should go to them." Only one woman had signed up. I sent her over to the Communist teacher.

We finished the course, after another two-week period of instruction later, with thirty-four baptisms. A men's group of thirty was baptized soon after and still another six months after that. Fighting spirits inhabited the Village of One Hundred Peacefulnesses.

We won hands down that time. We could not have gotten away with it much later. In no time at all we heard stories of Communist soldiers tearing through a village, pulling down crucifixes and holy pictures from the walls of Christian homes. Sometimes they collected all rosary beads as well. Extra work was levied on Catholic men. Extraordinary taxes were collected from them. And wherever we taught, rumors circulated:

"Catholics aren't going to get any share in field distributions."

"The Catholics are enemies of the state."

"Mao intends to execute all Catholics."

"They'll all be herded into concentration camps."

Isn't it a miracle that anybody at all attended our classes?

Things came to a head in the Village of the Three-Eyed Cave, where Father Donlon was teaching a men's group. It was a wonderful group; nearly all were family heads, teachers, or petty officials. Father stayed several days with this enthusiastic group and then returned to the city for his parish work on Saturday and Sunday.

On Sunday, the secretary of the county commissar arrived early. He called a town meeting that lasted all the morning. The subject was imperialists, foreigners, and Catholics.

There was another meeting in the afternoon. The secretary had heard that the farmers' representative, a fairly important official, was in the miscreant group studying Catholicism. The representative was relieved of his office immediately and loudly.

When the secretary stopped for breath, thinking he had cooked the goose to a tasty brown, it must have hurt him deeply to see our students go off (every one!) to the No. 1 Catholic's house for their regular catechism lesson. This was a challenge. He called another meeting for the evening. And here is his talk:

"China is like a household. The people of China are the daughters-in-law of the house. Our glorious Government is the mother-in-law. If a particular daughter-in-law does not obey, it is the right and duty of the mother-in-law to throw her out.

"Our mother-in-law grants to us many privileges and freedoms. For instance, we are free to plant and sell opium. But no mercy can be granted to anyone caught smoking opium. So too with gambling. Cards can be bought or sold; gambling houses are free to open. But anyone caught gambling must be punished.

"The same way with religion. We do not close the church nor send the foreign devil away nor prohibit him from teaching. The prohibition is for you, China's daughters-in-law. You must not go to church, nor study the doctrine even in your homes. Your good mother-in-law will ostracize you. She imposes extra work and will give you no part in the wonderful benefits she is planning for good members of her family.

"Let us make it clear. There is freedom of religion. The foreign

devil is free to preach inside his church. The Government is free to prevent you from going to his church."

The secretary remained in Three-Eyed Cave for three days. In the end, rather than run into worse trouble, we called off all village instruction groups.

But in that single year of 1950, 399 Chinese had learned the Faith and freely embraced it in the Sacrament of Baptism. *Laus Deo!*

FOUR

Strangle Hold

They got us on November 1, just as we left the convent for Mass, about seven o'clock.

A whole brigade of soldiers was lined up outside the convent door. The four of us had no idea that this demonstration of military power was for our benefit. We tried to slip quietly down the alleyway, but the platoon commander shouted, "Stop!"

We did, and in a hurry.

"Foreign devils are too good to obey the laws of China, I guess," he said.

"Which laws?" I asked him.

"Curfew laws. No one is allowed out of his house until 8 A.M. New law. Made last night."

"Oh, I see."

"Return inside."

We lost no time getting back into the house.

Father sent a boy later in the morning. Mass, hereafter, would be at 8:15 A.M.

We ran a gamut of abuse each morning. Soldiers, young fellows, petty officials who had to stand in well with the Party, school children, all prated the epithets they heard at meetings.

"Foreign devils!"

"Baby killers!"

"Imperialists!"

The Chinese Catholics brave enough to come to Mass fared worse.

"Running Dogs of America!"

"Enemies of China!"

Many, of course, could not take it. They walked by the church as if intent on going some place else.

"Go on in!" the soldiers jibed at the Catholics. "Go in and die in your church! We're going to nail the door shut when you're in. You can all die together, the Americans and their running dogs! Why waste bullets on the likes of you?"

At Sunday Mass there was quite a crowd, however. A young Chinese priest was at the Consecration, the most solemn part of any Mass, when the soldier who usually stayed in the back of the church, noting who were the courageous Catholics, strode up the aisle.

He stood at the altar rail and shouted, "Stop this thing!"

The priest hesitated. Then he continued calmly. The Christians took up their chanting again, but Father motioned them to silence. Gradually they slipped out of church, heading for homes and anonymity.

Our soldier friend subsided after the first outburst, but he kept a stiff military pose at the altar rail. No one dared move past him to receive Communion.

As the priest left the sanctuary, the Communist faced us: "No more Mass!"

The church in Wang Ding moved into the catacombs.

Protestant and Buddhist services were stopped, too. The excuse was that no public meetings could be held during the ticklish time of field distribution. There were too many complaints, too many bitter wailings, as the farms tilled by generations of a single family were parceled out to strangers. Too many years of patient industry wasted; too many upstarts rewarded.

Our Bishop issued a pastoral letter on the subject:

"Lest there is collision or collusion between rich and poor,

public assembly has been suspended, including the celebration of Mass in public. This prohibition may last from Advent until after the Chinese New Year. The edict will effect especially the feast of Christmas and possibly Ash Wednesday.

"The law should be obeyed literally so as to obviate annoying consequences. Our Catholics should be instructed, however, in their obligation under the circumstances to devote the time to family or to private prayers, which otherwise would have been spent in church.

"There is no need to warn against any discussion of the law regarding distribution of the fields. Apart from the moral right of any government to equalize title in land in favor of economic betterment for the general good, the project may be considered purely a temporary civil action of a political nature, not affecting our concern. Also any temporary suspension of civil rights of assembly, even though involving church congregations, unfortunately, may be justified to preserve internal tranquility. Hence, there is no need to caution against disapprobation.

"Even though we are limited in our apostolate, there are still many opportunities of doctrine instruction, especially in center catechumenates, without publicity; in encouraging our village Catholics to Daily Rosary in their homes; in the diligent care of individuals, especially of the tepid. Above all, we should preserve and show absolute confidence in God's providence, without permitting any thought or talk of discouragement. Even though tempted, perhaps, physically to sit back and wait, we should rather seek other openings when one is closed."

You can see from this how carefully the Bishop avoided offense to civil authorities. Nonetheless, he was the victim of consistent extortion. Aided and abetted by the Government, workmen of all types took their turns at demanding money.

Once it was the Farmers' Union. Brandishing hoes and poles, about a hundred farmers and any number of school children, police, and professional agitators swarmed into his yard demanding $60,000,000 JMP (Chinese Communist currency) or about

$2,750 U.S. to dredge a creek so that it would not overflow into their fields. While the heads of the delegation were interviewing the Bishop, the rest of the crowd, led by the agitators, trooped around the house singing anti-American songs and shouting anti-American slogans.

"What will we do if he refuses?" the agitators called at intervals.

"Wreck the place!" they yelled.

The Bishop capitulated.

Another time it was his own workmen, about fifteen of them. At Chinese New Year, when it is customary to give gifts to one's employees, they demanded millions. The Bishop fended them off then, but later they were worked upon by a Government agitator and mustered up their greed again. This time, backed by "big shots," they extorted from the Bishop $2,000 U.S., a gratuity over and above their salary which some of them had been drawing for months without doing a bit of work.

This sort of thing happened regularly about every two weeks. It was part of a consistent policy, not merely the sporadic outburst of grudges. Once, when the Bishop refused to pay one of these extortions, the mob beat him black and blue, blacked his eyes, and kicked him while they beat him over the head.

We hardly ventured beyond the front garden those days. We had Mass, but at seven in the evening. We stole through back ways to the church and slipped in the back entrance. There, picking our way through the sacristy with a small flashlight, we slipped into the sanctuary.

A single candle on the altar flickered beside the missal. Father wore no vestments. The Mass was always that of the Blessed Virgin because most priests know that practically by heart. We knelt near him, a dark-clad semicircle melting into shadows, and made the responses almost inaudibly. And all this was while crowds of people passed before the placard on the front door which stated, "No more Mass!"

I always carried a Precious Burden home; for I had the privi-

lege of communicating the Christians who softly tapped at our door by night or slipped over the garden wall during the day to receive the Blessed Sacrament. Church regulations were relaxed; they were required to abstain from solid food for only three hours, and from liquids for one hour.

We told no one about the Mass. One evening our chief catechist's wife came just as we were getting ready. We stayed home that evening.

The situation did not last long, two or three weeks at the most. Then the church was open again—but for use as a barracks and later for storing the army's rice. No one seemed to remember that the Mass restriction was to be only temporary.

A queer feeling comes over one when the usual noises are stopped. No one splashing through the puddles outside the window on Never-Gets-Dry Alley. No shouting of rival water carriers. No mother-in-law trouble next door. No puttering of Na Fu in the kitchen. I stopped that old rattletrap of a sewing machine and listened. Nothing!

I turned, alarmed, and saw Na Fu behind me, frozen.

"Look!" and she pulled me from window to window.

We were surrounded. In the rear the road was blocked by police; the usual passers-by had been rounded up and pushed to one side. Even a bus was stopped and all passengers were herded together. In front, police lined the empty street. Everybody in the alley stood in his doorway looking toward our house. Guards were on the roof tops on either side of us. The place bristled with soldiers.

The other Sisters in the house had joined us by now. We said a short prayer and waited.

In no time came thunderous knocking. We opened to a swarm of soldiers who quickly spread out to ransack the house. The leader took me to our tiny chapel. He leafed through our books, poked under the organ, peeked behind the stations on the wall. He rolled up the altar cloths, examined every candlestick, dab-

bled his fingers in the ablution cup. He tried the door of the tabernacle. My heart stood still.

"What's in there?" he asked.

"It is very sacred," I answered.

He looked at me keenly. "You have a secret radio there!"

"No, not a radio."

"Open it and I shall see for myself."

"Only a priest can open that door," I said, stalling for time.

"Send for him then," and he went on to other things. I hoped he would forget about it.

Another soldier (an innocent country lad) ran up to the commander. "I found the ammunition!" he exulted. He showed what he had concealed in his hand. It was only a box of new colored crayons, each one nicely pointed. He had come across them in Sister Charlotte's room.

The commander slapped them from the boy's hands to the floor. "You make me sick!" he shouted. I felt sorry for the boy; he was so crestfallen.

A woman, a Northern Chinese, was also in the party. She was never satisfied with the job the men did. She went over everything much more thoroughly. She and I were in a lavatory, already well searched. But Mrs. Do-It-Over had to lift one heavy pail after another, sweating and straining at work that is hard for men.

"Take it easy," I said to her and laughed aloud.

She didn't know just what to do at first. Then she, too, laughed. "Men!" she said in disgust. "They never do a good job!" And she went right on.

A searching group had gone with Sister Charity to look through the medicine supplies. The others congregated in the parlor. They sat down to rest and think up new ideas.

Mrs. Do-It-Over had a bright one. She broached it to the men in whispers. They didn't seem to like it too much.

"She wants to search you," the commander said.

"That's up to her," I said.

She was all for starting on me then and there, but the commander said, "Take her into the next room."

The performance was private, but thorough. Of course, she found nothing. I was annoyed at her, but amused by her amazement at the kind and amount of clothing we wear. We returned to the parlor, and she had another inspiration.

"How about that locked box in the chapel?" She meant the tabernacle. There was nothing to do but send for Father. He came under guard, of course; for the Father's place was in the same turmoil as ours. Thank God, the investigators were content to see inside the tabernacle. They did not touch it.

This time, the commander himself thought up something. "The woodpile! I'll bet that's the hiding place!"

Out they swarmed to the back yard, pulling with them Na Fu and a woman who had come in for curiosity's sake.

"Move the wood," the soldiers commanded these two women.

Na Fu's spunk was up. "It's your search. Do your own work!" But it was only a grumble; she knew she had to do it. It helped them both, though, to pile on the grumbles.

"I never worked so hard in my life; the Sisters never make me work like this."

"You'll have to give me a big meal after this. We're doing your work and we have to be paid."

"If it rains, and this wood gets wet—!"

"Why don't you help us? Oh, you're afraid of the ants!" They were vicious little pests and the woodpile was full of them.

One soldier did gingerly pick up a stick just to prove he was afraid of nothing. The ants crawled merrily up his arms and legs and he dropped it fast.

The woodpile yielded no evidence of our crimes.

By late afternoon everybody was starving and we all took time out to eat. We had company at the table, of course. The commander sat at the head to watch every bite and hear every word.

We sat the evening out in the parlor, just sitting. In the back

of each Sister's head was the question, "What about the night?"

Na Fu and her friend came to the rescue. "Are you going to sleep in this house tonight?" they asked the soldiers.

"What's that to you, Running Dog of Imperialists?"

"Because, if you do, we're going to sleep here, too. Right in the Sisters' rooms."

"Why?" they asked.

"Because Sisters are different. They do not have men sleeping in their houses."

"Communists are good men," the commander said sternly. "They never do anything wrong. The Sisters need not fear us." I believe he was right—about his own group at any rate.

He went on. "You women can't sleep in the Sisters' rooms. You'll be giving them information and plotting against the Government."

"We'll sleep outside their doors, then." Na Fu was as obstinate with them as she often was with us.

She was a match for them. In the end they decided that neither men nor the two women would sleep in our house. We could lock our doors as usual. The commander had a few parting instructions.

"Go to bed quickly. Do not talk to each other. You must be very quiet."

We were so good at being quiet that we rose, dressed, had breakfast, and let Na Fu in the back door, before they even knew we were awake the next morning. Na Fu had plenty to tell.

"Van Yn [catechist at the mission] was tortured all night. He and his father were taken to jail yesterday morning. Van Yn was told to write a confession that the Shun Fu [Spiritual Father, a common title for priests] was giving money to him and to his father to smuggle in opium. You Sisters are supposed to have opium, guns, hidden radios.

"Two women teachers, Moo Lan and Kam Foh, were taken

yesterday, too. Remember Moo Lan's twins, just a year old? They're in jail with their mother. Kwan Do, the former principal, was questioned for hours yesterday."

"What about the priests?"

"They're like you. Entertaining guests."

The search continued all the morning while we sat in the front parlor under the eyes of a half-dozen guards. No one guarded our gate, however, and we could see Catholics and neighbors peek in and then come forward when they saw us through the window. We did our best to wave them away for we feared the consequences for them. Once or twice, when a friend got our signal too late to retreat, she came forward with a very sad story to the guards:

"My baby is so sick, and I need medicine. Will you permit these vile prisoners to get medicine for me? That one, there, knows just what my baby needs."

In going back to the medicine chest, even under guard, the visitor was often able to get her message across.

The guards now brought forth their own ailments. Two had skin diseases and Sister gave them some ointment.

"How much do we owe you?" they asked.

"Nothing. We do not charge."

One was only too glad to get it free. The other pulled him aside, and soon they insisted that Sister take something. It was a tight spot. If the men were not genuine and sincere, this might be a ruse to get us into trouble. Sister took the money in the end; they looked like good boys.

The rest of us in the parlor had our hearts in our mouths several times that morning. In the search, a soldier climbed up our rickety water tower. It was never built to hold a man's weight to begin with, and it hadn't been built yesterday.

"Be careful!" Sister Charity warned.

"Never fear. A Communist soldier can do anything. He can climb to the moon, if he wants," the guard answered blandly.

Toward afternoon, we felt at home with our guards. Through-

out the house, other men kept coming and going, sometimes in uniform, sometimes not, always searching, moving, tapping floor boards, poking, prying. They even scrambled over our roof several times, a feat which no one in his right mind would attempt. But when no great official was around, our youngsters amused themselves with what they found—a camera, a victrola, the organ, a View-Master set, and several boxes of jigsaw puzzles.

One young boy was sprawled on the floor just in front of the door. He was a picture, with his cap on the back of his head and over on one side, his brows puckered, his chin in his hand, as he bent every scrap of his attention on a jigsaw puzzle. It was a simple one with only a dozen or so pieces. He kept putting them together and taking them apart, all the while talking and laughing to himself.

Several serious young men took the View-Master to heart. They were as intent as high school seniors boning up for exams.

We took the opportunity to slip out into the kitchen for a bit. Na Fu was there, of course.

"They've rounded up all the women who ever worked for you," she reported. "Me, too. And the questions they ask! 'How are you treated?' 'What salary do you get?' 'Where do the Sisters get their money?' 'What kind of currency do they use?' Thanks to the Lord of Heaven, we all gave straight answers."

We went back to the parlor. Everybody was content, it seemed.

"May we ask you, please," Sister Charity inquired in best Chinese courtesy, "to accompany us to another room? We have not been as industrious as we should be these two days. If you will permit us, we can work in the community room."

They were nice enough to come with us. We rolled bandages and sewed and put up pills and did our daily stint while the men amused themselves with despised America's gadgets.

After three days we were all taken off to the police station. The four of us were handed blanks to fill out in Chinese and English, in quadruplicate. It looked like a stiff piece of homework!

Name? Age? Monthly income? Education from kindergarten

up? Schools, years of attendance, tuition paid, grades in all subjects? Parents' names, ages, nationality, income, present residence, all previous residences with years? Same with all brothers and sisters. Life in the Orient: how long, where and when, income during various stays, types of work, etc.? Many of these things I never knew or had long forgotten.

"Bring these back in three days, together with six pictures." A pause. "Without that."

"Without what?"

"Without that headpiece," he said, at a loss for a Chinese word to describe our veils.

I had a special job assigned as well—a detailed financial report of everything received since 1949 and just how every penny had been spent, to whom paid and for what.

We handed over our passports, certificates, previous registrations, and diplomas, never to see them again. The officer assigned us definite days and hours to come for individual questionings.

Nonetheless, we went home jubilant. I think all of us had expected to begin a jail term. The relief of getting home to our own house again swelled up in our hearts as real happiness. We didn't bother to look ahead even to the imminent future.

The next afternoon, as the rays of the sun slanted in the window, we set up a private photographic studio. Each of us, wearing no veil but with our hair nicely arranged, faced an old box camera set up on a chest of drawers. At first I thought we couldn't make a proper exposure for indoor photography, but, warning the victim not to move a muscle, I clicked the shutter twenty-five times. Since on these cameras an instantaneous exposure is usually for $\frac{1}{25}$ of a second, we achieved the same result as a bulb exposure of a full second.

The film was sneaked out to a friend who made up dozens of pictures for each of us. They were no portrait photographs, of course, but were as good as most passports can boast. These little snaps proved most useful. Whenever a Communist official

wanted pictures for any one of the countless papers and cards we had to sign in the months to come, it was very convenient to be able to hand him pictures already taken, minus the veil.

Four days later I was called for police examination. With my sheaf of papers underarm, I set out along Never-Gets-Dry Alley toward the police station, keeping up a steady stream of "Hail Mary's" and "Come Holy Ghost's" that the right words would come to mind at the right time.

At the police station, I faced a team of questioners sent out from Peiping. There were a number of these teams throughout China checking up on all foreigners. Each had a certain set of foreigners assigned to it, to keep tabs on until they were expelled from the country.

The team was composed of a chief examiner, two Mandarin-speaking interpreters, a Cantonese, a man who spoke the local dialect (for each county in China has a dialect peculiar to it), and a secretary or two. These last were marvelous in that they could write "grass characters" incredibly fast. Typewriters are not practical for Chinese, since no convenient keyboard could carry even the most abbreviated set of characters, but secretaries have devised a sort of shorthand. To us, it would still be too long, but the Chinese are much quicker than we. For instance, the word "wet" in Chinese requires eleven separate strokes of the brush. The grass character for "wet" is a square with several strokes through it. They write it with amazing speed and accuracy.

These same two secretaries worked on my case until the final stage, eighteen months later, when I was expelled from China at Canton.

The chief examiner waved me to a chair in front of his desk and we were off.

The preliminaries done with, we entered deep water. "In America, what political party did you belong to?"

"Neither one. I voted for the candidate best fitted for office."

"How did your father vote?"

"I don't know. The ballot is secret in America."

When I gave the same answer for questions on how the Bishop of my diocese, the superior of Maryknoll, as well as all my relatives, voted, he could see that was a blind alley.

"Do you ride a bicycle?"

"Yes."

"Can you drive a car?"

"Yes."

"Can you handle a gun?"

"No!"

"Can you operate a radio?"

"I can turn the dials of a receiving set; that's all. And I am not very successful at that."

Then we took a little excursion into my hobbies.

"When you were in America, did you ever go skating?"

"Yes."

"Did you like tobogganing in winter?"

"Yes."

"Swimming in the summer?"

"Yes."

"Hunting in the fall?"

"No!"

"Do you know President Truman?"

"No."

There were three hours of such questions but, thank God, they found nothing to charge against me.

My papers were handed back, to be redone with fuller answers. I thought to myself, "The only question they haven't asked me is: Have you a jail record or shall we supply one?"

There was a parting injunction. "You are all to move into the top floor of your house. It is a luxury to have a house to yourselves. The rest of the place will be used by soldiers."

We had agreed that when the house was taken over for soldiers we would ask to leave China. We applied immediately for exit visas.

Awaiting word on the visas, we crowded into the attic. We had four Chinese beds, two chairs, a table, and an iron stand which held a wash basin of enameled iron. A corner of the attic room was portioned off as a chapel. Our Lord lived in the same room with us, for we had fixed up a small suitcase as a tabernacle, ornamenting it as best we could with tabernacle veils from our own chapel. Sister Charlotte, always quick with her tongue, said, "We're in hard times, surely, when God Himself has to live in a suitcase!"

In His presence we slept, ate, and worked. Only a sheet, strung between two nails in the walls, marked off His dwelling place from ours. Here was peace.

The rest of the house was bedlam. It seemed to be a transient house for troops. They would come in at all hours of the day and night, sit around talking and gambling for a while, and then fall anywhere on the floor for a sodden sleep. We often had to step over sleeping soldiers when we went each morning to get water from the well and carry it up to our attic prison. This was quite a job, for the buckets were the heavy wooden ones used throughout China.

Furthermore, the largest of the downstairs rooms was used as a detention station for prisoners. Often thirty or forty poor wretches were jammed into it for overnight stays or even longer. With no sanitary facilities attached, the room soon became unthinkably dirty.

Will you believe it when I tell you that we were most happy up in that attic? It was cold up there, but we often thanked God that it was not summertime, for the heat pounding on the tiles overhead would have been unbearable. As it was, Sister Alice Ann and I moved quietly around at our little jobs of washing, ironing (with charcoal irons), interminable patching, makeshift cooking, and really solid praying, with deep satisfaction. Once the disagreeable business of getting water and other supplies from downstairs was over with, the day was truly peaceful. Sister Charity and Sister Charlotte were not so lucky. Each morning,

they went out to the dispensary and ran a gamut of abuse from our nonpaying guests.

The reports in triplicate, in English and in Chinese, continued. Every now and then a new inventory was in process. Four officials came to the dispensary one day. "Tell me everything you have in this place of business," said No. 1 Man, seating himself at the table. Sister groaned. She had been through this so often!

"I cannot do that," she said.

"Why not?"

"My memory is very poor, Sir," she explained. "Perhaps I will forget to mention some of the things. Then you will think I have purposely forgotten them. It would be better if Your Honorable Self went from room to room and wrote down everything you see."

And he did! He took the whole inventory himself. Why didn't we think of that bright idea before!

Before the job was finished, the men were exhausted. "I have a headache!" one complained. "My feet hurt from so much standing!" growled another. They were simply aghast when they saw the medicines; they had no idea how to list them. Since we did not offer to do it for them, they decided to call it a day and go home.

Obviously, the police were closing in on our dispensary. We had several good scares. For instance, there was the case of Kim Lien and her infant grandson.

Early one morning Kim Lien came to the dispensary with the baby, who had a slight fever but appeared fairly well. Sister Charity gave him a pill. "If he does not improve, bring him back," she told her.

At two o'clock Kim Lien returned. In her arms was the grandson, plainly dying. His little soul took flight before Sister could do anything but baptize him.

"It was the pill!" Grandma stormed. "As soon as he took it, I noticed the change. And now he's dead! Foreign woman, you did it!" There were angry mutterings.

Sister Charity started to examine the little body; Sister Charlotte faced Kim Lien. The line-up of patients was, of course, agog to hear.

"Why didn't you bring him back immediately, then?" she asked. "Why did you wait six hours?"

But Kim Lien was too distressed. Between rocking on her heels in inconsolable grief and raging at Sister, she was quite unreasonable.

Things looked very bad. Such an incident, if it got to the police, could lead to anything. Then Sister Charity found the real cause of death. The baby had had a bad fall: apparently his head was injured.

Grandma broke down and admitted it. She was scared, now. "Don't tell my son!" she pleaded. "When he comes home, he will be so angry."

"Your story of the pill could have put both you and us in jail," Sister scolded her. Fortunately, the incident ended there.

Since we had applied for exit visas, it was imperative to leave the Chinese Sisters in order. Although they lived across Never-Gets-Dry Alley, we purposely had had little contact with them for fear that, identified as American sympathizers, their work for the Church would be hampered. We knew, without words, their moral support. One of themselves, Sister Joseph, had been appointed Superior. They were autonomous.

Na Fu was our chief contact. She went to live with them when we moved to our attic. Many a time she hobbled across the puddles with news.

"The Sisters from Pat Chook came in last night," she said one morning. "The church there was taken to store rice. They had to stand in the hot sun for two hours for punishment. Then they were given twenty-four hours to leave town."

"Sister Tet Yn arrived from Sin Shi yesterday," she reported another day. "She was alone. Sister Gnit Chong, her companion, was taken to Tin Paak for indoctrination. When she did not

come back after a week, Sister Tet Yn decided she should join the other Chinese Sisters here."

"Two Chinese Sisters in Sek Haang were arrested last week. Inspectors found a U.S. Army chopstick in the convent. It was left over from the last war, but it is evidence enough to put them in jail."

It was not long before she reported, "All the Sisters are going into secular clothes." And soon we saw them going up and down the alley dressed in the blue shirts and pants of Chinese women everywhere.

News leaked in from other parts of China, too. Four Maryknollers, two priests and two Sisters, were in jail in the Chaoto diocese. Bullets had been found in the convent, placed there either during or before the search.

Another Maryknoll priest and two Chinese Sisters were imprisoned in another part of China because they had received a magazine from Shanghai in which there was a derogatory reference to communism. We had the same magazine, but we lost no time in burning it.

We prayed every day for the visas. We were only a liability to the Church in China, speaking in a material sense.

FIVE

Go!

"Sister Gilligan and Sister Reinherr will leave for Hong Kong. Sister Calcotino and Sister Duffy—can go where they wish."

Two city officials and two policemen uttered the sentence. Two of them sat on our only two chairs; two of them stood by the door of our attic prison. We four Sisters, like prisoners at the bar, stood in front of the sheet which divided our small room into living quarters and chapel.

It was December 20, 1950. Exit visas for only two of us, the doctor and the nurse, had come. The military could not wait until the others arrived. They needed the whole house; we could shift for ourselves. Departure was to be tomorrow.

"Where do you wish to go?" the head man asked.

Sister Alice Ann and I looked at each other, and nodded.

"We will go to Kim Chang," I said.

Kim Chang was a fairly large city, center of a Maryknoll district where fourteen of our Sisters were stationed. It was not as well connected with the port cities as Wang Ding. Perhaps things would be more peaceful there. It was some hundred miles away by bus, two days travel.

That settled, we smiled with satisfaction. But soon we heard the conditions of leaving.

"Sister Gilligan and Sister Reinherr will advertise their crimes in the daily paper."

"Crimes? What crimes?"

But the chief investigator was unperturbed. "The advertisement will run for five days. It will announce your intended departure and ask if anyone knows of punishable crimes you have committed. The cost will be—"

He did some figuring on our table top and came up with the answer.

"—$1,870,000 JMP." (At the exchange rate then, this was $80 U.S.)

"But we simply don't have it!" I protested.

"Furthermore," he resumed calmly, "the Government's fee for two visas to leave the country is $4,500,000 JMP each ($200 U.S.). Interprovincial papers for the other two will be the same amount."

"It's impossible! Even the funds frozen in the bank are not that much."

"Possibly not. But your superiors in America can get it."

We had not lived long years in the Orient for nothing, however. Before they left, the sum was whittled down to $20 U.S. for each.

The delegation then went across the street to the Chinese Sisters and gave them a tongue lashing which included many choice epithets.

"But our benevolent Government still offers you a chance to change your ways. You are to offer to help the Americans this evening. Then you are to take their gold bars, their money, their church records, their valuables. Thus you can help your mother, China, to even her score with the foreign devils."

What a spree, that night! Of course, the Chinese Sisters leaped at the chance to help. Together we burned files and papers, relics and pictures, vestments and sacred linens—anything that could be defamed or desecrated. Sister Joseph took the ciborium. "If they find it," she said, "they'll think I stole it as they told me to."

We worked until the wee hours, put the finishing touches on what little personal packing we had to do, and lay down for a few winks before morning. Fortunately, there was a new crowd

of soldiers in the rooms below. They were making so much noise themselves, I don't think they had any idea of what queer creatures inhabited the top floor. If they did hear us, they probably thought that more of the same rioting was going on above them, as below.

And so to sleep. When you're tired enough you can go to sleep in a boiler factory!

Cold, wet, dark. We stepped over the sleeping soldiers and out into the rainy dawn. The last Mass was across the street at the Chinese Sisters' house.

We knelt, a sodden dark group in their *k'ang,* while Father passed back and forth before the lone candle and recited the prayers of the Mass in barely audible whispers. I looked from face to face in the dimness. It seemed too ordinary to be true. Was this strong woman beside me, this working woman in blue *saam* and trousers, really my Sister Joseph whom I had trained for twelve years? Was I really leaving her to be a pillar of God's Church in China's underground? What would she have to suffer before we met again, if we ever met again? This Sister Joseph, with her quick tongue and solid faith, was as Chinese a Chinese and as Catholic a Catholic as she could be. If she were ever called upon for martyrdom, she would sell her life dearly. I could see her coming into heaven, minus her head, perhaps, but with her hands laden with souls, and saying "See, Lord! Look at the bargains I have brought You. They were cheap at the price!"

"One foot solidly planted in heaven; the other, firm on the earth," I thought of her, deeply contented that God had given such a one to guide His Chinese Sisters.

Sister Charity and Sister Charlotte went off to the dispensary as usual that morning, because their clients would have no way of knowing that we were going. But by ten-thirty they were escorted home by some ten or twelve officials, who took over our place. Every book we had packed was pulled out and investigated from cover to cover. Every piece of clothing was felt through to

the last seam. Every article we wore, every toothbrush, every shoelace, each tooth in each comb, each bead of the rosary, each hem of a handkerchief was examined. Sister Charlotte's little geranium in its tin can was uprooted and the mud sifted.

Then they started sorting the baggage. This we could take; that we could not. Sister Charity lost all her microscopes, her medical instruments, and medicines. All rosaries, crucifixes, and scapulars were confiscated. But we saved our books.

It was teeming rain still as we carried the boxes and bundles down the stairs through the groups of wide-eyed young soldiers and loaded them on the carriers' carts at the door in late afternoon. Na Fu, jostling around with the carriers, tried to slip us hard-boiled eggs. "Eat them on the way," she muttered. But old age gave her away; she wasn't as quick at smuggling eggs as she might once have been. The guard caught her, confiscated the eggs, and pronounced sentence: "Stand over there in the rain, old woman, for two hours." She had plenty to say in her own defense, you may be sure, but little good it did her.

Darkness fell as we plodded the four miles or so to the railroad station. Cold rain soaked through our shoulders, ran down our long capes, and splashed into our shoes. The guards walked silently beside us, ducking for shelter under any projecting eave, but we took the middle of the road. A few drops on the outside more or less made little difference, when our love for China was ready to spill over in tears.

It was a dripping, bedraggled contingent of guards, carriers, and American Sisters who crowded into the railroad station and shook the water from saturated clothes. I thought the station looked deserted but dared not admit what was obvious. Yes, tonight's train for Canton was canceled. "Come back tomorrow," the lone ticket agent said.

Back we tramped through the black rain, the guards madder than we were and the carriers maddest of all.

Locked up in the police station for the night, we hung our capes over the barred windows and wrung out our clothes. Then

we built a small fire in one corner of the stone floor where the wall had been blackened by many such overnight guests as we. Tea, rice and *soong,* a few minutes' talk, and we were only too glad to curl up for the night on the police sergeants' desks.

Bright and beautiful, morning came, and with it, separation. Sister Alice Ann and I would be departing from the others on the bus at noon. The last-minute messages, the "Don't forget's," the "Give them my love's" went on all the morning. For Sister Charity and Sister Charlotte would be seeing our Sisters in Hong Kong in just a day or so. From there they might be sent on to other Maryknoll missions over the world, for Maryknoll embraces the world. In another sense, the world embraces Maryknoll. Her sons and daughters everywhere think tenderly of the mission overlooking the Hudson where they learned that to love God they must first love every creature that God has made.

At noon came the rattling of keys. The door was flung open, and Sister Alice Ann and I picked up our suitcases and indicated our bundles to the carriers. "Good-by!"—and we emerged into sunlight. Off we marched between guards to the bus station, on the other edge of town, not far from the railroad station.

When I say "bus station" I don't mean a building but—to use the old meaning of station—a "stopping place." A place, in other words, where the roadside grass is beaten flat by shifting feet, where the ants are busy with remains of travelers' lunches, where the virtue of patience earns big dividends in peace of soul.

There was a goodly crowd waiting. Evidently they had been there for some time. Being prisoners, we could not join them but sat at one side. The guards took it easy, though, and often strolled off to a nearby tea shop. They reassured us. "Do you see these guns? We have to carry them because we are soldiers. But we aren't taking you out to shoot you along the way. So, don't worry." We hadn't even thought of *that* possibility.

It was a long wait. We settled ourselves on our baggage and surveyed the bleak December countryside. Not too far away was

the cemetery; I commenced thinking about Grandma Wong.

She had been a neighbor for years, a grand neighbor. At Chinese New Year she had always sent a few tidbits for us; at Christmas and Easter we never forgot her. But friendship wasn't limited to times like that. Everyday, almost, we had met on the road, or at market, or when her pig strayed across the road and had to be brought back home. Grandma's husband was in the States; he had sent her money now and then. With this, she built several nice brick houses which she rented out. Grandma Wong had been comfortably situated in our village.

In 1942 when Japanese forces took the town, we were interned in our own convent. Grandma devised the "Kwang Do air lift" long before the Berlin one made headlines. She used to tie meat, bread, fruit—almost anything—into neat well-padded bundles. Then when the guards weren't looking she'd heave them over the bamboo enclosure around our house. Once, even eggs were delivered by Grandma's air express—unbroken, too!

Sent to Macao for most of the war years, we found Grandma Wong jubilant in her welcome when we returned in December, 1945, after three years' absence. Things weren't so good for her now. Her sister had died; her husband sent no more letters from America. The houses she had built with his remittances had been wrecked by the Japanese, who had used the bricks to build sentry houses. Now she raised rabbits to keep soul and body together. We gave her all the grass she wanted for her rabbits.

Grandma had never been interested in religion, either pagan or Christian. It was not until 1947 that we persuaded her to accept the Pearl of Great Price. She found learning hard. She studied faithfully, but it took her six months to conquer enough doctrine for Baptism, Penance, and Holy Communion. On her baptismal day (the Bishop himself baptized her!) we asked, "What did you ask Our Lord for, today, Grandma?"

"I just said, 'Lord, if You're going to take the Sisters away again, like You did when the Japanese came, please take me to heaven before You get around to doing it.' "

She lived through the Communist occupation. Indeed, it had looked as though she'd be good for years to come. But about a week before we left Kwang Do for Wang Ding, a cavalcade of neighbors came in the front gate bringing Grandma Wong very ill on her cot. They left her in the front room.

Grandma delivered her burial instructions to me.

"I want a middle-class coffin. Don't be getting me one of those expensive things. I want a Requiem High Mass, too. Then take me out to the Catholic cemetery and put a very simple stone on the grave. Any money left over should be used for Masses for the repose of my soul."

The good Lord gave her everything, and more. She died with the Bishop, several priests, many Christians, and us Sisters saying the Rosary beside her. In China, there is no embalming, so people have to be buried the same day that they die. But Grandma died early in the morning. She had the Requiem High Mass with seminarians singing, a tremendous procession to the cemetery, and several blessings at the graveside.

Good old Grandma! She certainly had a way with God! As we sat on our baggage waiting for a bus to take us, perhaps forever, out of Wang Ding, it seemed to me that her wise old eyes smiled down on us. It wasn't hard to ask her to keep up her good work from the other side of the Great Divide, as once she had tossed her gifts in to us from the other side of a bamboo enclosure.

At last, a cloud of dust on the horizon! Everybody picked up his bundles and sharpened his elbows for the grand crush. The guards did not bother; they relied on our being guests of the Government.

The bus pulled to a shivering stop and the dust subsided. Like all other buses in China, it had a truck chassis fitted with a wooden, houselike body. The roof serves as freight car and everything in the world can be piled up there; I have even seen, and heard, a live horse strapped across the top of a bus. This particular roof was piled high with live geese. The guards sallied up to the driver. They had planned to put us on top with the geese while

the two of them crowded on the front seat, which was already jammed with four other passengers. The driver disagreed.

"Foreigners don't know how to hold on like we do," he explained. "First thing you know, we'll go around a sharp bend and those foreign women will fall off. That will be bad for you and me, too. Better wait for the next bus."

We did. So did nearly everybody else. One or two may have pushed in, but most people set their bundles down again and once more took a stance to view the length of the road.

The next was another goose truck. No luck this time either, thank goodness. The third was a salt-fish truck. We prayed hard that we would not have to leave Wang Ding, scene of thirteen years' mission labor, on top of piles of salt fish. The good Lord heard that prayer and, once more, the driver refused to take us.

The fourth was wonderful, an old U.S. Army truck, open to the wind and sun and not equipped with seats. It was certainly the answer to a prisoner's prayer. We climbed aboard with sixteen other passengers and disposed our luggage for seats. A cold windy day in an open truck on a dirt road meant one thing: tie a handkerchief over your nose to save your lungs from the solid brown dust that would soon cake everything else. In no time at all, it lay like powder on habits and veils, in the creases under our eyes, and like frosting on our glasses. But when it comes to a choice between live geese, salt fish, and dust, give me the dust!

The overnight stop was to be at Kin Choi. The bus drew up in front of the largest and best hotel in town. Our guards hustled us off and up to the top floor, which had been taken over by the police; two guards stood at the head of the stairs. We were shown into an elegant room, equipped even with running water. I blinked. Could this be prison life?

Our guards were weary. They gave their parting instructions briefly. "Do not leave this floor. Do not sing. Do not dance nor run confusedly about." With that, they were gone.

A Chinese house of the better type is usually built around an open court called the Heavenly Well. This lets in light and air

to the core of the house. It runs like an empty elevator shaft from the bottom to the top of the house and is often roofed over with glass above the top floor. At each floor a more or less ornate railing keeps one from falling down the Heavenly Well, and it is pleasant to stroll on the balcony surrounding this open space. All rooms open on to the interior balconies so that the Heavenly Well is like a common room built in layers.

I was still getting the dust and grime off me when Sister Alice Ann came bouncing into the room. She had gone out to read her office by the Heavenly Well. Now she dried my face and pulled me out on the balcony too.

"Do you see what I see?" she asked, pointing to the floor below.

I certainly did. It was Father McCarthy, Maryknoll missioner from Sin Shi. He was absorbed in saying his office on the floor below, holding his book out over the railing in an effort to catch enough of the dim light to read by.

We tried coughing; we tried waving a handkerchief; we tried stamping our feet. But nothing attracted his attention to us. We were afraid to call his name, or to speak in English, for the guards were so near. Then Sister Alice Ann thought of something.

We knelt near the railing, folded our hands piously, and began singing, "Maryknoll, My Maryknoll!" a community song.

In no time at all, Father McCarthy shut his book. His face searched around the Heavenly Well and soon he saw us. But he gave no sign of recognition. Instead, he merely went off to his room.

The guard came from his station at the head of the stairs. "What are you two doing?" he demanded.

"Just saying our night prayers," I explained as we got to our feet and went back to our room in deep dejection. We had hoped to hear from Father McCarthy what was going on in Sin Shi. Two of our Sisters were there, Sister Frieda and Sister Adelaide, conducting dispensary and orphanage. We had heard nothing of them for many months.

SIX

Midnight Story

"Sister!"

My eyes flew open in the darkness, but I did not stir.

Neither did Sister Alice Ann. Rigid, we lay fully clothed on the straw mat over the boards of that big Chinese bed.

"Who is it?" I ventured at last.

"Father McCarthy. Don't be afraid. The man on duty tonight is a Catholic. I had to wait until he came on shift."

We turned on the light, got up, and let Father in. The light hung on a single wire from the center of the ceiling and came far enough down to bump into one's head at odd moments. The current, as always, was very low. Indeed, we marveled that it was on at all. In most places, there are stated hours when electricity is available.

"Turn it off," Father ordered. "We don't want folks across the street or in other rooms to know you're up. We had better do our talking in the dark." Off it went.

He told us then the story of Sin Shi, first of the Maryknoll missions in China, one that had been developed during twenty-five years into a center for several smaller missions throughout the district.

Here is Father's story:

The army took over the entire compound several months ago. They gave us two hours to move out of the priests' house, church,

old folks' home, convent, orphanage, and nursery. We were all to crowd into a small building in the back of the compound. It had formerly been a place for transient Christians who needed a roof over their heads for a day or two when they came in from the village for feasts.

As I say, we had two hours to move in. You can imagine the scramble. Everybody with two arms and two legs used them as fast as possible. We put the stuff into baskets and the children did a regular bucket-brigade act.

One strange thing happened. Sister Adelaide as sacristan was responsible for getting the chalices from the chapel. She had them in her hand and was walking out of the sacristy when a soldier wrenched them from her and ran off. She was in despair over the sacrilege, but what could she do? In about five minutes the soldier came up to her, his eyes gaunt with fright. "What are these gold cups?" he asked in a trembling voice. "They make my hands shake so I can't hold them. Take them back!"

Before dark, we were moved. I'm sure Joshua worked his famous miracle the second time for our benefit. I never saw such fruitful two hours' work in all my life.

We were certainly a crowd. We had 4 Chinese Sisters with us, 128 orphans, 60 to 70 blind girls, and 18 old people, as well as your 2 Maryknoll Sisters and us 4 Fathers, all in one smallish building.

I must say the Sisters did a wonderful job of squeezing us in. They had to make a sort of sleeping platform for the children, pushing their beds together. We were stepping all over one another, especially on rainy days when the children had no place to play and wet laundry was strung fore and aft everywhere.

Our biggest problem was water. There was no well at our building but there were several in the confiscated ones. At first the Communists agreed that we could get water at the convent, but the children would have to get it. No grown person would be allowed near the well.

We told the children not to try to fill the buckets, as they

would be too heavy, and sent them off. In no time they came back, without water. Behind them was the commander.

"Perhaps you can get water at another well, the one at the Fathers' house," he suggested. But we had tried that before. The soldiers there wouldn't even let us send the children in.

"How about the river?" the commander asked.

I was really angry. "Would you expect us to go 3 miles for water when there are plenty of wells right on this property? The Communists say they love the poor. Surely there is no one poorer than these blind girls, these old people and orphans. In years past, we gave them everything they have—clothes, food, shelter. We will be very happy to continue to do this as long as we can. How can you refuse to let them have water so that they can cook their food?"

He was a decent fellow at heart. He rubbed his chin and looked at us all, crowded and jammed into that house. "I understand," he said slowly. "But I am afraid that you will poison the well so as to kill my soldiers."

Sister Adelaide laughed. "So! What better proof can you want than this—we will drink the water ourselves!"

It was settled. We could get water at 10 A.M. and at 3 P.M. each day. But he stipulated that a guard would have to be at the well or we could not draw water. The officer meant well, but the guards were good at finding excuses not to be there.

"We have to go to a meeting now. Sorry."

"It's raining now. We will get wet at the well."

"You're too early." And when we came again a little later, "You're too late."

We had a time with the vegetables, too. They permitted us to take all the vegetables growing in our garden—provided we took them all right away and never came back. You should have seen the women and girls! Even old Lan Si, who hadn't bestirred herself for twenty years, went sailing over the ground picking anything she could get her hands on.

We had to salt all that greenery down in order to preserve it.

It meant a lot of extra work, but saved money. But the children did miss their regular fresh vegetables.

We started right away, of course, to find homes for the orphans. A number of the older girls got married; some of the others were taken by the families of boys they were promised to. Some of the babies were adopted into our generous Catholic homes.

The tragedy was with the blind girls. Although we had taught them trades, such as weaving fish nets or sewing, still they realized that a society built on sheer materialism would have little use for them. The old folks, too, could see no brightness ahead. Poor things! I wonder where they are now!

[Father paused. Through the darkness, we could sense his worry and concern. His life had been largely spent ministering to these unfortunates. Then, he picked up his story quickly.]

Well, in a month or so, the healthy children all were placed.

One morning three soldiers came and asked Father Matthewson for medicine. "I've got malaria," one of them said. Father went to the dispensary. As he handed the fellow the quinine, the other two grabbed his hands and slipped handcuffs over them. "You're wanted for questioning," they said, and off they marched him to the police station. He asked permission to get his rosary first, but they refused. That evening we sent him food, clothing, and a blanket.

A few days later they came back for Sister Adelaide and then for two of the Chinese Sisters. Sister Frieda and I were arrested two weeks ago.

The charge was (of all things!) murdering babies.

You see, during the fifth and seventh months, as many as ten babies a day would be brought to the mission, having been abandoned in the streets. Nobody in our section raises a girl baby born in those months. During the planting season, too, the percentage of abandoned babies is high. Most of the little ones had been starving for days; some had been exposed to rain for hours and even days; others were already blind, diseased, or de-

formed—that was why they were thrown out. That we were able to save any at all is a tribute to the Sisters' nursing skill.

The intake of babies varied greatly. Some weeks brought ten; others sixty or seventy. The Communists added up the total and accused us of murdering some four thousand babies. Preposterous, but that's how they figured it out. There was no use pointing out the number of healthy children in the orphanage who would also have been dead but for us, and still less use to mention the thousand or so who had grown up with us and left us to marry and live in happy homes. To tell the truth, forty thousand would be closer to the number of infants brought to us in those twenty years at Sin Shi.

Sister Frieda was really magnificent as we stood before the investigator.

"Where does Adelaide (they never used the title Sister) keep her money?" they asked her.

"She doesn't have any," Sister Frieda said.

"Where does the criminal Matthewson hide his guns and ammunition?"

"So far as I know, he hasn't any."

"Adelaide stood in the sun for four hours for answering like that. We'll stand you in the sun, too. No, better still, we'll hang you up by the thumbs."

"I'm not afraid."

"We will cut off your head."

"A Christian is not afraid to die."

After four hours of this, one of the examiners said, "The mandarin says it is necessary for you to go to jail for killing four thousand babies."

Sister, like all women, had the last word. "I'll go to jail, then. But I didn't kill any babies, nor did anyone else at the mission. We tried hard to keep them alive."

While the soldiers stood around joking, Sister was searched. The woman examiners felt her all over, running their hands

through Sister's clothing. Her veil was taken off and she was photographed. Sister was so embarrassed she was scarlet.

A particularly pestiferous official who had come often in investigations of the mission, enjoyed this hugely. He said to Sister,

"Now do you believe there is a God?"

"Of course!" Sister said.

"Then why doesn't He save you from jail?"

"This is not the time for Him to save me. He will do it when I die." She paused, and added, "When you die, you will know there is a God."

That infuriated him. He cursed and swore at her. I thought he would strike her. She stood there dressed only in her long gown, ready to go to prison.

"Give her the darkest, dirtiest, smelliest cell we have down there," he fumed, finishing his tirade. "It's far too good for a foreign devil."

Father McCarthy stopped.

"Go on, Father," we begged.

"I can't," he said. "That's practically all there is to it. I never saw any of them again. I don't know what happened to them. The soldiers gave me the works, that night, trying to get me to say where we kept our guns. Several times, I went out under it. I'm the type that gets sick at the sight of blood. In the end, they knew I couldn't take it, I guess. At any rate, they sentenced me to be expelled from China.

"I'm going to Hong Kong now. I've been held up here for a few days awaiting the final approval of the exit permit. It ought to be along tomorrow."

Father was silent and so were we.

"I wish they wouldn't!" he said, tensely. "I can take anything, it seems to me, rather than this—to be sent out of China as too 'soft' to suffer for God. I should be back with them in Sin Shi. I don't want to go to Hong Kong."

"Don't you worry, Father," Sister Alice Ann soothed him. "God has hard work for you in Hong Kong or He wouldn't be sending you there."

He knew it, of course. And soon we were chatting of people we knew. We gave him messages for our Hong Kong Superior, Sister Mary Imelda. He gave us greetings for the Maryknollers in Kim Chang.

In no time at all, it seemed, the Catholic guard "harrumphed" at the door. Father slipped away.

SEVEN

State of Siege

We were up and off on the bus before dawn, December 23.

The road runs along the river as you near Kim Chang. My head was way out the window, looking for the first sight of the mission.

"There's the pagoda!"

The Catholic pagoda was a landmark in Kim Chang. Graceful, creamy white, rising in seven pointed stories, it poised on the river bank. Reflections of the upturned tips stretched out endlessly in the rippled water.

Father Langemann was pastor of Kim Chang mission. He loved everything about China—the people, geography, customs, art, and personality. He breathed deep in China, as he breathed nowhere else in the world. This pagoda, we all knew, epitomized his love for the country.

But being a practical American he made the pagoda useful too. The first floor was a garage, the second held the mission's generator, the third was a storage place, and so on. High at the top, under the gleaming metal cross surmounting it, was the water tank for the whole compound. In this pagoda, Father Langemann had baptized Chinese architecture.

The bus stopped. We piled off, guards, baggage, and ourselves, as well as half the bus load. Carriers swarmed about the place scrambling for passengers' luggage. But nobody scrambled for

ours. One or two, when the going got tough and it looked as though they might have no business at all, eyed our pile of belongings tentatively. But the guards gave no encouragement and they scampered off after safer prey.

It looked as though we were in for it, so we loaded each other up with bundles and suitcases and picked up a heavy basket to carry between us.

"We'll have to come back for the rest," I said to the guard, hoping that they would help a bit in the carrying. After all, we were moving the remnants of a whole convent. They grunted and turned to begin the walk to the mission.

"Will one of you officers stay here and guard the luggage until we can return to carry it?" I asked dubiously.

Neither one wanted to go, then. Two trips back and forth would wear them out. Why not stay comfortably with the luggage and let the other fellow do the walking?

It was a silent tug of war between them. Just then, a woman carrier stepped from the bus station's shadow where she had been watching developments. They motioned her to pick up the rest of the stuff, and we strode off down the main street heading for the bridge.

"Ay yah!" the woman yelled. "Such heavy stuff! Why don't you move the house and all? If my pole breaks under this load, you'll pay for it!"

Still complaining at the top of her lungs, she caught up with us as we stumbled after the guards. Then she suddenly lowered her voice. "Don't go to the church," she warned. "There is trouble."

She let loose another barrage of loud complaint. Then, *sotto voce,* "The soldiers took it three days ago. Nobody has been allowed in or out since."

Time out for grunts and groans in fortissimo.

"They say that Father Langemann is America's No. 1 spy. They're cooking up a huge public trial if they can find any evidence at all."

Again, the complaint department raised its voice.

"If you go there, they'll keep you, too."

"But we have to," Sister Alice Ann said. "The guards have orders to leave us there."

We had crossed the bridge by now and drew nearer to the beautiful pagoda, rising in serene beauty as if it knew nothing of the turmoil going on at its very base.

The first thing to hit my eye was a big sign

CHRISTMAS MUST BE STOPPED!

pasted over the front entrance. It could be seen a long way down the street. Smaller signs supplemented it, all of them saying, in effect, "Yankee, go home!"

We got into a mix-up, right away. The soldiers guarding the mission were Northerners, speaking Mandarin. We and our guards spoke another dialect. At first, the soldiers assumed we had escaped from inside, somehow, and were being brought back. But why all the baggage?

In the end, they took the lot of us to the commander, busy at that moment in the Father's house.

As you enter the priest's residence in Kim Chang, you find yourself in an unpretentious foyer. Off to the right of this is a fairly large office with a grilled window looking out on the foyer. Beyond that is the pastor's private office.

Through the grilled window, we saw Father Langemann. He sat in the exact middle of the outer office. Three soldiers stood in corners of the room with rifles turned on him. The commander was rooting through drawers and files.

This had gone on three days then. It was to continue for four months more. Even then, Father Langemann was haggard and worn. I doubt if he had slept at all since the surprise attack.

Sister Alice Ann raised her voice, talking exceptionally loud. Father heard and turned to us. Then he made a large wide gesture like a man swatting lazily at a fly buzzing round his face. But we knew. It was the Sign of the Cross in Absolution.

And the Sign of the Cross was followed by a big wink!

This was the first time I had seen him for several years. It was to be the last I would see him this side of eternity. Fifteen months later he died in a Communist prison in Canton.

Father Langemann had seen this coming a long way off. He was ready for it. As the soldiers had marched into the compound three days before, he raised his eyes from his desk and took a long, long look.

"This is what we bargained for when we elected to stay in China after the Communist occupation," he said to his secretary.

The commander came out to us. He was puzzled by our unexpected appearance. It complicated matters. He had his hands full with this church investigation, and now here were two nondescript nuns coming in on him from another province. Should he put us in the convent where five other Maryknoll Sisters were now confined in the basement? Perhaps we were spy couriers and would give them information. Or, should he send us to some other Maryknoll convent nearby until he got this present investigation off his hands?

"Do you know the way to Wee Chao?" he asked.

Yes, we knew. It was a small town about 10 miles west of Kim Chang.

"Go hire bicycles and take these Americans to their convent in Wee Chao," he told our guards. "Take them to the police first, to check them through."

We took up the luggage again and started off. Right in front of the convent, we fussed around pretending to adjust the bundle more comfortably, to wrap the ropes with cloth so that they would not cut into our hands, to shift things in the basket to equalize the burden. But it was all in vain. No sign of greeting, nor even of life itself, came from the building. We could stall no longer. We picked up the baggage and went on.

The guards were surly. They had to retrace their steps to town and weren't rid of us yet. They strode ahead in black humor, and it was all we could do to keep them in sight when we reached

the crowded streets. How the poor carrier woman kept up with us, I don't know, but she did.

At the police station, the guards presented our papers. The inspector grunted and called us to his desk. He pointed to the picture on my documents.

"What is this thing—a person or a devil?"

"A person," I answered meekly. I never claimed to be a beauty, but I had hoped to be recognized as human.

"Show me another."

I fished into a prayer book and pulled out a snapshot taken at Maryknoll when I was a novice, wearing a white veil.

He grunted again. "Still a devil," he commented.

He went through our luggage, more for curiosity than anything else. Sister Alice Ann had a notebook full of children's stories translated into Chinese. He read the title of one.

"Hummmmph! 'The Three-legged Mouse.' What is that?"

"A story for children," Sister said.

"It's stupid. Have you ever seen a three-legged mouse?"

"No."

"Then why do you have it there, written down!"

"It is only a story."

"Have you ever seen a three-legged mouse?"

"No. I answered that before."

"Have you three-legged mice in America?"

"No."

He grunted again and put the notebook away, satisfied that American mice were no different from Chinese mice.

He picked up another notebook containing mimeographed notes for instruction courses in Catholic doctrine, in English.

"Read it in Chinese," he commanded.

Sister obeyed. "My dear old grannies, young mothers, and girls. You are very fortunate to be able to be here to hear the wonderful doctrine of the Lord of Heaven and to learn how to save your souls—"

"That's enough!" he shouted and slammed the book shut in her hands.

He was grumpy. "All finished. All done. Go on with you to Wee Chao!" and he washed his hands of us.

We packed up the stuff again and set off for the bicycle taxi station.

The bicycle taxi is an institution which, so far as I know, is distinctly Chinese. The luggage rides the handlebars and you go astride the rear wheel behind the driver. There is nothing to soften the rack you sit on and nothing whatever to hold on to but your faith in Divine Providence. If ever you prayed, you pray now, as you careen through city streets, skim the edge of a precipice, go over a stream on a one-board bridge, or whizz along the slippery banks of a rice paddy. You see nothing approaching; your vision is blocked completely by the driver's back. Indeed, most of the time, your nose is in violent collision with that perspiring back as the driver twists and writhes at his pedaling. And, as some dark object skims past your cheek, you have no idea whether it was a building, a freight car, or a placid water buffalo.

Our cavalcade of bicycles started out from Kim Chang six strong. Besides the four needed for passengers, we had two for freight. All the handlebars in Kim Chang, we thought at first, would be needed for our luggage, but by stuffing it everywhere possible on the two extra bicycles and on the handlebars of the passenger taxis, we got it all on the six bicycles—a feat even for professional packers!

I might add here that this entire trip was *our* party. In China, the prisoner pays. His clothes, food, medicine, and transportation are all "on him." The Government provides shelter and a basic menu which is hardly enough to keep a sparrow alive. Consequently, we were deeply interested in getting our luggage stowed on two extra bicycles—not half a dozen.

By 3 P.M. we were ready and the drivers were off, threading their way swiftly through the heterogeneous traffic of a Chinese

city street. Nobody pays any attention to sidewalks in China. Everybody invades the street, and vehicles honk their way through if they are in a hurry.

We were out in the country soon. I was glad of this, but my mind pondered the question: What would we find at Wee Chao? We knew that there were two more Maryknoll Sisters there, Sister Adelaide and Sister Vera, both catechists.

This reverie was interrupted by my driver as we walked together up a hill too steep for a laden bicycle. He handed me a wad of bills. "Take this, Sister, and give it back to me at the end of the ride. The guards will think you paid us."

First stop at Wee Chao, of course, was to pay our respects to the police. The place looked deserted; the lone sergeant at the desk checked us in and sent us on our way.

Small wonder there was nobody at home at the police station! We found the convent and rectory at Wee Chao in the throes of a search. About two hundred people of all classes were pouring through the convent, inspecting, examining, "borrowing," and generally sight-seeing. We pushed through the crowd in the yard and entered the convent with little trouble.

To the police outside, we were only two more Maryknoll Sisters under guard. We hauled in our stuff and paid off the taximen with the money their leader had given me.

"*Tien gee po yao* [God bless you!]" I said to him under my breath and meant it with all my heart.

"Who's in charge?" the guards asked.

"Lo Fout Youn. He's upstairs," the policeman answered.

We trooped upstairs to meet the man who, for months to come, was to be our very special Big Bad Wolf.

We found him in the Sisters' community room, a small little place because this was a convent for only two Sisters. He swept his hand across a table.

"Dust!" He exclaimed. "You're lazy!"

A straw mat covered the rough pine boards of the floor. He kicked it contemptuously.

"See what luxury! You have extravagant furnishings while there are poor people without them."

He turned his attention now to the two girls who kept house for the Sisters.

"How much do these American dogs pay you?" he asked.

Without blinking an eye, they named a high salary. It was really more than they were paid. But, as they explained later to us, the Sisters' care for them when they were ill and various other little kindnesses should be counted in.

Mr. Lo proceeded to the next room where the Sisters slept. He ran his finger along a high shelf. No dust. He poked into a corner. Well swept. He surveyed the neat white beds and made accusation: "You waste time with fussy housekeeping when you could be doing useful things for the People's Government."

I smiled across the room to Sister Adelaide. She was taking it all in, in utter silence. She continued to go around with Mr. Lo, but I wanted to slip downstairs and get the rest of our baggage.

Halfway up the stairs, however, a woman had taken her stand so as to harangue the crowd of sight-seers on the ground floor. She was a short, squat woman dressed in official khaki. Two pineapple-type hand grenades were slung from her belt; they bobbed and dangled every time she shifted weight from one foot to the other. She really had quite a story for her audience.

"You are now in the foreign women's secret house. In the past, common people like us were not allowed inside. But the People's Government brings all wrongdoing to light.

"There was a very good reason why these American dogs did not permit the workers to see the inside of their house. And I will tell you what that reason is. A secret door connects the rectory with this convent! These people, this priest and these Sisters, are ashamed now. Their immoral lives are exposed to us—the People!"

Sister Vera had come up behind me as I stood at the top of the stairs. She was not one to let such a statement go unchallenged.

"Can you show the people where this secret door is? I also would like to know, for I have no knowledge of a secret door in this house. The whole house is open for inspection now; perhaps you can show us all this famous door you speak of."

But the woman paid no attention. She could yell louder than Sister Vera and found it expedient to do so right then. Defeated, we went down by a back way for the baggage.

Sister Adelaide was still trailing Mr. Lo. He ransacked cupboards and desks, pouring out a stream of insults, of which the mildest was "American dogs." He came across a duffel bag packed with a blanket, basin, sheets, towels, and a change of underclothes.

"What does this mean?" he demanded. "Are you trying to escape?" Sister Adelaide laughed at him.

"If I wanted to get out of China, I would have done so long ago. No, we are ready for prison, that's all."

"You must have committed crimes, then. Innocent people don't prepare to go to prison." But he walked on.

Sister walked on with him. She did not leave his side for a second. It annoyed him, we could see. At last he turned to her and snarled, "What are you afraid of? I'm not a thief!"

"I know you aren't, Mr. Lo," she said. "I have something else to fear."

"What could an innocent person fear from an officer of the Government?"

"Well, some of our Sisters in other parts of China have been innocent and yet, after their homes were searched by police, they were accused of having guns and bullets and Hong Kong currency. The evidence was found in the convents after the soldiers had finished their search. I do not wish anything like that to happen here. I know for a fact that this house is clean of everything contrary to Government rules. No Sister here has a gun; she would probably shoot herself if she ever tried to handle one."

Mr. Lo drew himself up to his full 5 feet 2 inches. There was a pained expression on his face.

"Such a thought would never enter the head of a loyal Communist!" he avowed. "It would take an American to conceive such treachery."

At dusk he took his hordes away. Gratefully, we four Maryknoll Sisters barred the doors and sat down just to look at each other. It was several years since we had met. So much had happened and was likely to happen! But the more I looked at them, the happier I was in the Good Lord's choice of companions for the months ahead.

Sister Adelaide was a Yankee from New Hampshire. Spare with words, she made each one count. From the time she was eleven, she had had no other wish than to be a Sister. Blessed with any number of sisters and brothers, and some twenty-eight nieces and nephews, she had had very strong home ties, and was always making something nice for a new baby. Yet she serenely put aside any idea of marriage and went to Maryknoll at eighteen. She seems never to have had a flicker of indecision as to what she wanted to do with her life. The light had always shone clear on the path to converting China to Christ. In her late thirties it was as steady as ever.

Sister Vera was tall and slender. Ten years before, she had been an extremely efficient secretary in New York. She could get an idea down on paper in record time. She had a memory for names, dates, faces, records, previous history, and addresses past and present that was amazing. She had been Superior at Kim Chang convent until about six months before. In this way she had worked with Father Langemann and knew his plans well. He still liked to consult her.

Sister Alice Ann was young, so new to China that she had not yet sallowed down to the nondescript yellow-brown all missioners become. Her fresh red cheeks and startlingly blue eyes were a constant wonder to the Chinese people. She loved excitement and had the stamina to go through it without losing her head.

"I wouldn't miss this for the world!" was her favorite expres-

sion in the face of danger. Yet she had the sense to let wiser heads make the decisions.

Our council of war met over four bowls of soup and four cups of coffee that evening. Several things were agreed upon: (1) that Sister Alice Ann and I would bed down on the community room floor "for the duration"; (2) that we would cut food to a minimum, for no one could estimate how long the siege would last; (3) that Mr. Lo was out to do us harm.

From the disheveled heaps of stuff the crowd had left all over the floor, we pulled together enough bedding for the night. With a tired "Good night" to God, we dropped off to sleep with little more ado. It was not the first time by any means, that we had used the floor for a bed.

For me, personally, there was real elation in the thought that tomorrow would be Christmas Eve. Mary, who was bringing Christ to Bethlehem, probably rested on a floor somewhere that December 23, two thousand years ago. I hoped in some humble way to bring Him to the cold hearts of Communists. To me, the floor was a good omen.

EIGHT

Posies—Outside the Wall

Midnight Mass at 3 P.M.!

Using a special faculty granted by the Internuncio, Father Ching, the Wee Chao pastor anticipated the Christmas Midnight Mass, saying it in the afternoon when Catholics would not violate the curfew. It was heartwarming to see the roads filled with them, trudging to what possibly was their last Mass. They knew it too.

After the Mass, as usual, a crowd collected at the church door to pass along parish news. In the center was (of all people!) Koi T'ao, an apostate who, said Sister Adelaide, had gone over to the Communists soon after their arrival in Wee Chao.

"We Catholics," he was saying, "ought to be represented more in the Government. We ought to go to the rallies and meetings, and we should go not as individuals but as a Catholic group. Let the Government know that Catholics are good Chinese! The Buddhists and Protestants do.

"We have a Chinese priest here. Why aren't we present in a group at the demonstrations against America? Why shouldn't we enthusiastically support the Triple Autonomy for the Church? Priests in Chungking are all for it."

He was a good talker. Many listened. There was but one who raised a voice in opposition—Mi Youn who earned a precarious living as a bicycle taximan.

"What? Again?" he said, half-laughing. "How many people do you think I am? Already I go to these meetings, as a member of the Bicycle Men's Union, or because I live on Half-Moon Street. Or with my evening indoctrination class. Now you want me to go as a Catholic.

"The Government ought to know by now that I am a good Chinese. Let's keep the Church out of this. The Constitution grants freedom of religion; let's use it!"

Some agreed with him; some with Koi T'ao. As they drifted away, the apostate went into the church. I saw him there several minutes later, kneeling in the back pew praying intently. He told Father Ching how he had happened to come to Christmas Mass at all.

"For several weeks, I have been trying to forget Christmas. Not much luck. In the middle of a meeting, right in the midst of a speech, but most often when I was going to bed at night, Christmas would pop into my thoughts. Two days ago, I looked at a calendar just to verify the date. I planned all sorts of things which would take me anywhere but to church on this day.

"I almost knew it wouldn't work. So I was hardly surprised this morning when I found myself walking this way. 'I might as well go to the church door, since I have come so far,' I told myself. As I walked up the path, I heard the prayers again. What memories they brought back! I felt I just had to go inside and drop to my knees before God.

"The sins on my soul, Father! Just a few weeks ago, I wrote a confession for the Communists, denying the existence of God. I've repeated that denial in so many speeches since! You know why I did it, Father; so do I. A man can't get ahead with this Government unless he denies God."

He seemed a humbled and contrite man. Which was he fooling—the Government or the Church? Probably neither. But the Government used him to the end. So far as I know, he never again returned to the Church.

Christmas morning, Sister Adelaide was up early. From my couch on the floor, I could hear her moving around, poking into boxes and drawers. By the time the rising bell rang at about six, she had fashioned a real Christmas.

A good bit of tinsel salvaged from some ancient box outlined a Christmas tree against our dark wall. Balls and candles, angels, fruits and stars were made of colored paper.

An array of presents was spread below, profuse in quantity if nothing much in quality. A spool of thread, a new pair of plastic chopsticks, several little notebooks for Chinese study, a set of the Four Seasons (colorful Chinese prints on paper). We had not come empty-handed either. We donated two galvanized iron pails from Wang Ding to replace the rusty tin ones of Wee Chao.

Best of all was the crib. The stable itself was made on the framework of an overturned bamboo stool. The figures were of paper, covered with crayon. "Not bad, atall, atall," as my grandmother used to say.

We were merry about it all. St. Paul was right when he said, "Having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Really, that's the only time one does possess all things, isn't it?

Mr. Lo was the first (and only) Christmas caller. He came about ten that morning with printed forms.

"On these you will declare all your guns and ammunition, as well as radios, wireless sets, and other espionage accouterments," he said, blandly.

"But we don't have anything like that! You have been all over this house and you know we don't."

"You had them in the past, I'm sure," he said. "It makes no difference that they are not here now. Just sign!"

I think he had hoped to take us off to jail that very day because, when we would not sign the blanks, he gave his ultimatum.

"The whole compound is now being taken over by the police as a nest of espionage. You will remain here using the top floor

of this building only. The Youth Corps will hold the lower floor for meetings and offices."

Moving again! The four of us were to stay in three rooms upstairs. We began thinking of what we would need in the line of furniture, books, cooking utensils, water buckets, and so on.

It was a hard day's work—so hard that we did not notice at once the commotion outside. Police and soldiers were again swarming over the compound. The church was taken over as a prison. Father Ching's house became police headquarters for this district. He himself was one of the first prisoners to be jailed in his own church.

In the late afternoon of that Christmas, 1950, I stood by an upper window overlooking the compound. A file of prisoners had just been brought into the church to relieve the overloaded prison in town. Guards, policemen, and soldiers milled in the road below. Some had bedding and baskets of their belongings, for some of our buildings would be used for barracks. Women carriers jostled and swore at each other as their shoulder poles bumped and their heavy buckets spilled.

A spot of bright red color caught my eye. An old woman was carrying a magnificent bouquet of poinsettias. In that drab assemblage, she might as well have been carrying living fire. Like the bird in the Apocalypse, she turned neither right nor left but flew straight ahead. I watched her progress from the window.

"Who is that?" I asked Sister Vera.

"Well, of all things! It's old lady Plum!" she answered. "I wonder where she's going with those poinsettias!"

The bright red spot bobbed through the crowd directly toward the church. Few people were in the area behind the church; the crowd was milling around the entrances in front and at the sides.

Old lady Plum headed for the exact center of the rear wall. There she bent over and placed her poinsettias reverently on the ground. Standing, she bowed three times toward the tabernacle

within. Then she stepped back solemnly, turned, and mingled with the crowd.

"There's a valiant soul! God bless her!" I thought.

It was the first time I had ever seen Mrs. Plum. She was to prove a life line to us in the months to come.

She was sixty years old and as poor as they come. Indeed, in the Communist grading of wealth, she rated the lowest bracket. Her small hut was built against the mission wall. She could not lose much by loyalty to us.

For five years she had not worked hard at being a Catholic. Only six months before, when the Communists started the anti-Church campaign, did she realize what the Church was. She was making up for it now, with a lionlike devotion that could not do enough for Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. It was like her to bring, not a modest handful of posies, but the biggest and best she could get.

Mrs. Plum resented the injustice done to us. She managed to make a regular guerrilla out of her small grandchild. We were permitted to tend our small vegetable plot every afternoon, and just at that time the grandchild, about eight years old, would clamber over the wall and ask to help carry the pails of water. She was a great favorite with everyone, dancing attendance on the guards as well, bringing them tidbits "from grandma," and worming her way into every heart. But, alone with us in the vegetable patch, she gave the news, reporting faithfully the goings-on outside.

In this way we knew that a high official was conducting the church investigation—not just a local man. The church was to be tried before the People's Court. Every day, neighborhood meetings pondered the question: "What can we accuse the priest and Sisters of?" When the accusations reached thirty, Mrs. Plum said, the trial would take place.

Six months before, I would have scoffed at the idea. Thirty crimes against us! Fantastic! But, as 1950 ended, we could reflect soberly that four of our Maryknoll Sisters were in jails in South

China and one was presumably dead in Korea. Ten or more Maryknoll bishops and priests were working off similar "crimes" in prisons. Thirty-five of us Sisters were sitting it out under house arrest with no idea of what would happen to us the next day. These were only the ones I knew personally. What of the others unknown to me?

Over in the church, not 50 feet from us, were ninety men and twenty women prisoners. Father Ching was allotted his space on the floor with the others, a space exactly the dimensions of his body, no more, no less.

We saw him go out to work in the morning and return in the evening, one of a long line of dirty, exhausted men. He wore only shorts. His back was burned black with the sun. He walked with pain; the rough stones on the road cut his feet. He suffered more than the others for he was a city-bred Chinese and had always worn shoes.

The prisoners worked on the roads or carried rice for the Communist Army. As the heavy sacks plopped on their thin shoulders, the thought of all that rice for soldiers must have galled them. Their own meals came twice a day and consisted of a small bowlful with a little bit of vegetables thrown in.

Father Ching and the other prisoners used to come down to the fishpond near the convent to bathe. He saw us at the window one evening and shouted in English, "Confidence in Christ! Courage!" with a big flourish of his hand. The guards were in good humor that night; they only hustled him along, through chickens, polluted ponds, and undisposed-of sewage.

As I looked after him, a ragged half-naked man limping fast to catch up with the line, the odor of sanctity wafted across the court. I sensed a high clear exultation that Christ has His lovers in our age too, whose love for Him is strong as death and hard as hell. Hard as a diamond that no jagged place of hell can scratch. Harder than hell.

A minor victory over Mr. Lo brightened the year's end although it turned my hair gray in the process. When Sister Alice

Ann and I had reported to the police, the lone sergeant at the Wee Chao station did not want to take time to examine our baggage.

"Take it over to Wong's house," he said. "I'll go through it later and send it on to you."

But days passed and nothing came. Then, on December 29, Mrs. Wong sent a message: "Your belongings are scattered all over my front hall. Come and get them. The police have left them around everywhere. I'm not going to pack them myself for fear you'll say I stole something."

We presented the case to Mr. Lo. He flew into a rage that we should accuse the police of not packing the baggage neatly and sending it on. Wretched American dogs we were! We would pay for this calumny! Mrs. Wong, too!

"I'll go with you and get to the bottom of this lying!" With that, he stalked out of the house. Sister Alice Ann and I followed. A guard tagged along and a bunch of Youth Corps lads joined in just to see the fun.

How we prayed! What if Mrs. Wong was just getting us into trouble? What if somebody else had packed it up already? What if the sergeant had waked up and had sent it along?

The party invaded Mrs. Wong's house. Everything was just as her note had stated. About fifteen books were scattered here and there. A few clothes were roped into a bundle and left in the middle of the floor where everybody would have to step around it. The keys were tossed carelessly alongside.

Mr. Lo started in on Mrs. Wong, but she gave him a good piece of her mind. Mrs. Wong was not without influence in the Party, so everything was smoothed over nicely.

Mr. Lo contented himself with making out a long document stating that we had received our baggage intact. He made us check each item and sign the document. This cleared him and cleared us. Everybody was happy. Mrs. Wong could use her front hall; Mr. Lo possessed the document; and we were grateful to have our heads still on our shoulders.

Mr. Lo became affable: "We will deliver the baggage to your door. Please do not think of carrying it yourselves."

He went off—to see that rascally police sergeant, no doubt—and our guards conducted us back to those three little rooms upstairs.

I know it isn't nice to say "I told you so." But looking at Mr. Lo's retreating back, I thought the Good Lord would forgive me for just thinking it.

NINE

The Rise and Fall of Ng Fout Fa

At this stage of the game—enter Ng Fout Fa!

Head of the Youth Corps in Wee Chao and directly responsible to the county police, he was quite somebody. He considered himself much above Mr. Lo, who was merely head of forty-six villages (neighborhoods, we would call them). Mr. Lo could boss around the village police, but the county police had nothing to do with him.

Ng Fout Fa rubbed his hands together when he heard of our small victory over Mr. Lo. He saw a way to make a little pin money for himself.

This young fellow's family were not strangers by any means. Some years before, many of his relatives asked to become Catholics. Father had to refuse because the whole family were opium smokers. They were fairly well-to-do then, but lost their wealth to "the rabbits"—the local name for opium dealers always *t'iao p'i*—ready to jump and hide. Just before the Communists came in, they eked out a not-so-good living by making superstitious papers for pagans to burn at festivals. Also, when not lying drugged on the floor, the men pedaled a bicycle taxi.

Sister Adelaide had hired his uncle the previous year to paste paper on the ceiling of the downstairs room, so that those walking on the floor above would not cause dust to fall on the room below. The uncle charged four times as much as he should.

When Sister protested, he acted so queerly that Sister let him have it.

"You should know better than to hire an Ng," an old neighbor had reproved her. "That whole family smokes opium; and opium comes high nowadays."

Ng Fout Fa was young, but already he had sallow skin and sunken cheeks, marks of the comfirmed addict. This job of his was the best anyone in the family could boast. It was up to him to make hay while the Red sun shone.

He approached Mrs. Plum, who, he knew, was friendly to us. "If the Sisters will pay a little something, I will get their baggage from Mrs. Wong's house."

Since we expected the baggage any minute after Mr. Lo's kindly assurances, we paid no attention to this offer.

In a few days, Mrs. Plum came again and urged us to take him up on it. "Whatever Ng Fout Fa says is believed by the district police," she argued. "If he offers and you do not accept, he can report just about anything on you. Mark me, he will be believed —not you!" So! There was blackmail in it.

We held a council of war among ourselves. Apparently, the lesser of the two evils would be to give him the money. Mrs. Plum agreed.

"You don't understand, Sister," she said simply. "This is our way of doing things."

We were in no mood to argue the principle of it with her.

Late that afternoon, Ng Fout Fa presented himself. As head of the Youth Corps which held its meetings downstairs in our convent, he could very easily slip upstairs to see us. All he had to do was to send the Youth Corps out on a parade or a demonstration.

He sat at our kitchen table where we entertained Stalin's little helpers; both the other rooms we considered to be bedrooms. Ng Fout Fa's small eyes shifted here and there, estimating the rice in the sack, the price of the vegetables on the table, the quality of the soup in the pot. He crossed his short legs, well-muscled by

hours of bicycle pedaling, and puffed out his opium-sunken cheeks, obviously playing the role of a "big shot."

"I like you Sisters," he said ingratiatingly. "I feel so sorry for you. The truth is that you were too clever for that Lo fellow. He lost face over the baggage and he is determined not to let you have it now. Not that he needs the stuff nor even wants it. He thinks he can make you suffer without it until he is ready to give it to you.

"But I hate to see anyone treating Sisters like that. I'm going to take Lo out on a party and get him to sign over the baggage to me. He'll do it, I'm sure, for he is a little afraid of me. It won't cost much—just $50,000 JMP [about $2 U.S.]. I'm sure you will want to invest that much to get your baggage."

We gave him the money.

Several days later he was back again, full of inferences about how much he had done for us and how he longed to do more. But he would need another $50,000.

He made a call nearly every day, to report on the softening-up of Mr. Lo. Again, he felt that the job would take another $50,000. For the third time, we paid.

On the tenth day we saw the baggage coming. Ng Fout Fa met it at the front door and brought it proudly up the steps. We innocently thought that this, at last, was his delivery of the goods. But the next day, Mrs. Plum told us: "The police sergeant got around at last to following Mr. Lo's orders. Ng Fout Fa had nothing whatever to do with it."

With that source of income gone, our Youth Corps head had to think up another.

All our money assets had been frozen when we were placed under arrest. However, we were allowed to draw out about $220,000 JMP a month for food and living expenses. This may seem like a lot, but in American money it amounted to about $9.09. The daily allotment for each Sister was less than eight cents a day!

At the end of January, Ng Fout Fa presented himself once

more. "I have been delegated by the district office to get your money for you. When you need some, just write out the check and put the convent stamp on it. Then write a letter to the chief of the district police. I will do the business for you."

The letter and check were written with much misgiving, and went off in the pocket of Ng Fout Fa. The next day he returned with a collecting voucher from the chief of police.

"It certainly took a long time for me to get that voucher for you!" he said, wiping his forehead. "I had to wait around the chief's office all day. Didn't get another thing done. But I'm glad to be of service in any way I can. Just sign this and I'll take it to the bank tomorrow." The voucher was for only $200,000. We said nothing and signed.

He brought the bank book the next day. There was a withdrawal of $200,000 all right, but Ng Fout Fa handed us only $110,000. Sister Adelaide looked at him sharply. "You are $90,000 short."

"I retained it for my personal use," he explained blandly. "Only a loan, of course. I'll give it back to you in just a few days."

She asked him for a receipt. He gave it gladly, to prove his honesty. But he knew, as we knew, that in Communist governments ordinary people don't report on an official.

Twenty days later, Sister Adelaide started the process of getting the next regular monthly allowance. It always took Ng Fout Fa several days to go to the chief for the voucher, and several more before he got the money from the bank. In February, he returned with just half of the $200,000. The bank book showed only $100,000 withdrawn.

"What happened?" she asked him.

"That was all the police chief would allow you," was his laconic reply.

Maybe this was so, and maybe it was just his way of getting back at Sister for her requests that he return the $90,000 he had borrowed in January. In the meantime, he had borrowed other things. First it was a sheet because he needed a cloth for a table

downstairs. Then he asked for our clock "until his own was repaired." Paints and brushes took his fancy after that. Finally, the Youth Corps was putting on a show downstairs and they needed our pressure lamp and curtain. Nothing ever came back except the curtain, which had been carefully inventoried and therefore would be missed.

Speaking of inventories, we had quite a time with our Christmas crib. When we started to take it down a few days after Christmas we were forbidden. "That shrine was inventoried," the guards said. "You cannot dismantle it."

You see, that would mean changing all those reports in quadruplicate and quintuplicate in village and city and county and national offices, stating that the Americans at Wee Chao had a shrine of paper and straw in the northeast corner of their living room.

The crib stayed up during January, February, and March, getting dustier and more decrepit daily. The paper figures couldn't take it and cockroaches chewed off the wax crayon colors. Poor St. Joseph bent over double on his staff; Our Lady curled herself into a roll. The straw on the floor and the brown paper rocks of the cave plainly wanted to be put away until next Christmas. Most of all, we needed the bamboo stool which formed the stable framework. We could use a bit more space, too.

Finally in April, our cat had kittens downstairs. A wild cat raided her hide-out and killed the kittens. Crazed with grief, poor kitty dragged the mutilated corpses upstairs and hid with them behind the crib, unknown to us. We puzzled over the horrible odor for days. Then we saw a decapitated little kitty in the straw.

Permission to dismantle the crib came from Mr. Lo. He himself supervised the operation to make sure that we had no secret stores or radios behind the crib. Piece by piece, we took the stuff, held it up for inspection, while Mr. Lo held his fastidious nose, and put it in a box to be burned.

About the same time, and with just as bad an odor, we got rid of Ng Fout Fa.

"Is there anything I can do for you Sisters in Canton?" he asked one morning, swelling out his chest a little. "I have been appointed to the Government Military School there, and may be able to put in a good word for you. Someone here, no doubt, will be able to handle the little affairs I have been doing for you up to now."

We asked him to do what he could to hurry along our exit permits for Hong Kong.

Smiling affably, he assured us that to do so would be nothing at all for a man in his position, and took his leave.

Not ten minutes later, Mr. Lo arrived. He got around to the point at last.

"Did Ng Fout Fa borrow a curtain from you?" he asked.

"Yes, he did."

"Did he return it?"

"Yes-s-s-s," slowly. "He returned the *curtain* all right."

Mr. Lo caught the hint.

"What else has he borrowed from you?"

Sister Vera gave him the list. She had everything all written down with the dates.

"These will be returned to you," Mr. Lo said and launched into his theme. "The Communist Government will always punish malefactors. Ng Fout Fa has been demoted and shamed before the whole village. It is not Communist policy to covet anyone's things." He said this last, looking straight at the church, the rectory, and our own place!

The next day a police squad tracked down the details: One sheet—size? age? weight? state of repair? any distinguishing marks? One clock—description? size? manufacturer? etc. The same with three brushes and two small cans of paint. Lastly, the pressure lamp.

"You'll have them back this very day."

"What about the money?" Sister Adelaide asked.

"Another squad handles money thefts."

That very evening, a plain-clothes man went over the details again. By this time, we did not know whether we were on the carpet or Ng Fout Fa. The plain-clothes man explained: "This case has been referred to higher authorities since the vile criminal Ng Fout Fa used the Government's name to extort money. You are not his only victims." With all this departmental blame-shifting, we could see our sheet and clock and pressure lamp getting farther and farther away.

But a very much humbled Ng Fout Fa was dragged before us the next morning—dragged, furthermore, by his own Youth Corps boys whom he had bossed around so highhandedly. The young fellows had their guns trained on him and were using all the choice language he had taught them to apply to criminals. They were apt pupils.

They brought with them the clock, sheet, paints, and brushes. "Where's the pressure lamp?" said ever-practical Sister Adelaide.

"That's being used by the Women's Night School of Indoctrination," Mr. Lo explained. "The Government wants that."

"I suppose that makes it legal," Sister Vera said under her breath.

They bustled their prey off to the church to lock him up for his crimes. Two days later the whole village held a public trial for Ng Fout Fa. His specialty in graft, it seems, was to sell exemptions from forced work. Everyone between fifteen and fifty-six, man or woman, had to give three days' work to road building each week. Ng Fout Fa made a tidy sum on his penmanship. He wrote "Ill today" on so many work slips that the district police began to worry about the health of the Wee Chao residents.

His extortions of money from us were of small note. The theft of sheets and brushes and things like that was something everybody could understand. The prosecutors wanted something tangible to add to the list of accusations.

Other accusations were in order, too. Mr. Lo and two of his henchmen sat in our small kitchen for an hour before they came to the point.

"This Ng Fout Fa was a nasty fellow," Mr. Lo began. "He was not above doing dastardly deeds." He paused impressively.

"That is true," Sister Adelaide said to fill in.

"As head of the Youth Corps, he had access to this building, day and night," he continued.

We were silent, seeing ahead to his next question.

He leaned forward. His ratlike eyes searched each face in turn. "Tell me. Did he not attempt violent acts with you?"

We denied it. He affirmed it. We denied it. He affirmed it. This went on for an hour and a half.

My patience was sorely tried. "He would not, could not have dared such a thing," I said. "We are religious, dedicated by vow to the service of Christ in virginity. God would certainly protect us. Besides that, we all wear whistles."

"You wear what?"

"Each of us carries a whistle. A blast on any one whistle would bring the rest of us to help. I think, all together, we would be a match for Ng Fout Fa."

Mr. Lo wiped his brow. "I think so, too," he said.

So, that was one crime they did not charge Ng Fout Fa with; it had been cooked up by the Youth Corps who had long chafed under his arrogance. But there was enough to make a spectacle out of the poor fellow. When the trial was over, he was discredited, ostracized, and abandoned. He could not take part in meetings; he had no share in the distribution of fields. But they could not make him pay back any money; he had smoked it up in his opium pipe. Not even a Communist can squeeze blood from a stone.

We decided, then and there, that we should have a woman sleeping in the house with us. Mrs. Plum volunteered for the job. She would also do our buying, spending that precious eight cents

a day for each of us, squeezing the last grain of rice, the last half-ounce of buffalo meat, the last grain of rock salt out of it. She could haggle with the best of them; she knew who would give her extra for the American Sisters. Besides, she could come and go freely and could slip in many a precious Burden. We paid her $50,000 JMP a month, the official rate, and she was worth it.

TEN

Trial by Mob

We had box seats at the preparations for our own trial, which had been pending since Christmas Day when the compound was taken over. That is, living directly over the Youth Corps' meeting hall had this advantage: while the accusations against us were not formulated there, nonetheless they were discussed among the boys; and boys, neither in China nor in America, are noted for their soft voices.

There were forty accusations against Father Ching, each one more preposterous than the next. Here are just a few:

A former pastor ten years ago had accidentally shot a buffalo belonging to a neighbor. The matter was satisfactorily settled, and full restitution was made. Father Ching was not even in China when the affair happened; he was a student in Singapore, then. But that did not lessen his guilt.

Father's dog five years before had bitten a woman. Father brought medicine and paid her damages until the leg was healed. Nevertheless, the accusation read, he was at fault because he did not continue to send her tonics.

A basket for rice contributions was placed at the church doors. In this way, he "extorted money from the poor."

When land for the mission was bought twenty-five years before, buyer and seller were both satisfied. But now, it was claimed, the Church had not paid enough for it. The Government, not the

family who had sold the land, demanded several million more.

Father's dog had killed a chicken. The woman had demanded five chickens in return but Father had paid her for only one chicken.

There would have been one more in this odd assortment of crimes but for the bravery of a woman. Father was to have been accused of having forced himself upon her, but she went to the police chief and had the fortitude to say, "If you accuse him of that, I will stand up and deny it."

On January 6, we could see through the cracks in our floor that the Youth Corps lads were busier than usual downstairs. Bright-colored banners were spread out and they were writing big bold characters on them. Young artists in a corner busily wielded paint and brush to produce vivid posters. We were not flattered by the results. Most were of Father, "running dog of the Americans," but several showed us as wolves in sheep's clothing, luxurious landlords squeezing the poor, pious hypocrites wallowing in immorality.

A rehearsal of the trial took place in the church courtyard that evening. We listened. After all, we had prominent parts in the show.

Mr. Lo presided. "This will be a big affair," he told them all. "You are not forced to come. Our beloved People's Government forces no one. On the contrary, everybody must come willingly."

He went on with time, place, route of march, seating arrangements for the chief spectators, etc. Then he got down to details.

"Along the way of march, you are to throw dust, small stones, pebbles, or refuse. Do not throw large rocks. You can use your imaginations as to the language to scream at them. When I give the signal, rush at the foreign women and tear off their veils."

"Shall we pull their glasses from them?" someone yelled. Mr. Lo was undecided, but we settled the question for ourselves. We would not wear glasses tomorrow.

They practiced yells and songs to fill the spaces between accusations. Thus, when the judge and other officials would get

tired and have to recess for a wee drop of something, some sort of show would entertain the customers. After all, it was to be a lengthy affair.

When the crowds had shouted themselves hoarse and gone home, Mr. Lo began to decorate the place for tomorrow. Without a word, he mounted up to our little domicile carrying a rolled-up strip of bright red paper under his arm. He leaned out an upper window and attached it to the front of our house. Stretched out, it read:

DOWN WITH RELIGION, THE OPIATE OF THE PEOPLE!

Then he went across to the rectory and blazoned on the front of it:

DOWN WITH FATHER CHING, RUNNING DOG OF THE AMERICANS!

The banner on the church read:

DOWN WITH THE CHURCH,
THE ARM OF IMPERIALISTIC COUNTRIES,
THE OPPRESSOR OF THE POOR!

When he had finished, he left quietly. I must say he worked hard at the job as head of the village.

We held another council of war to plan our strategy for tomorrow.

"Any sort of resistance will only make them violent," Sister Vera said. We agreed. The best thing would be to take it all quietly, showing neither fear nor anger. No reaction at all is most disheartening to hecklers.

And so to bed, if not to sleep.

Mr. Lo came early. It was a great day for him and he wanted to get the most out of it. By eight o'clock he was sitting in our kitchen, straddling a chair backward, and just watching us as we each downed a bowl of rice and a cup of thrice-boiled coffee.

His arms were spread out on top of the chair back; his chin

rested on the back of his hands. His ratlike eyes alone moved as they went from face to face exulting in the humiliation to come that day. Now and then his tongue ran over the corners of his mouth.

At nine, the head of the Home Guard stormed up the stairs. "Mr. Lo!" he called. "Honorable Lo!"

"What are we going to do?" he shouted as he came into the kitchen. "About a hundred Catholics are in the ball field already. They came at dawn and got all the best seats! They'll certainly cause trouble."

Mr. Lo turned on us. "You told them to come! You want a riot. You informed these people. You're destroying their obedience to the Government!"

We could only protest. "How could we rally a hundred people, we four women cooped up in three rooms with hundreds of soldiers outside and the Youth Corps itself just below? As for informing them, who put up the posters and taught the songs? Didn't you say everybody was to be there? How can you call that disobedience? They were quicker to obey than anybody else!"

The Home Guard was sent running to disperse the Catholic groups as much as possible.

"You are to wear *sam-fu* [the regular dress of women in China —coat and trousers]," Mr. Lo growled by way of retribution.

"We have none," Sister Vera said.

He did not press the point.

At ten there began the sounds of drums and cymbals and shouting, as Father Ching was led to our front door. He was thin and pale. He wore a soiled pair of pajamas, sneakers, and an old fedora. Someone had filled a Flit gun with ink and sprayed it all over his chest. This was to indicate his "black heart."

Ropes tied him tightly around the neck, arms, and body. In China, criminals are roped so that the hands and lower arms are free. The bonds pass around the neck, across the shoulders, down the back, and end by tying the elbows tight against the waist.

The prisoner can thus feed and dress himself, but any movement of the shoulders or upper arms tightens the rope around the neck.

Surrounded by six husky policemen with drawn revolvers "Criminal Ching" stopped at our front door. Mr. Lo placed us behind him, two by two. The procession started.

Shouting mobs led by cheerleaders lined the street. Singing and cursing, yelling and screaming, they bellowed all the filthy taunts they had learned. We tried not even to notice, but said the rosary together quietly. Now and then, a handful of dust or gravel, an old cigarette butt or a blob of mud hit their targets, but we never blinked an eye.

Just where our little lane meets the main street, a voice called out: "Take off their veils!"

A rough hand whipped the veil from my head. I turned quickly, snatched it back and put it calmly over my arm, proceeding forward as if this were an everyday affair. The other Sisters were able to take their own veils off and they, too, carried them over their arms. Thus we kept the guards' heavy boots from trampling underfoot the symbol of our virginity.

There is a certain satisfaction in knowing that we did not look too ridiculous. We Maryknoll Sisters wear our hair fairly long, in readiness for just such occasions. More than once, in similar situations, we have found enemies ready for a tremendous laugh at our expense, only to be confronted with a fairly decent head of hair instead. This time, forewarned, each of us had even prepared a presentable coiffure. There is feminine foible left in all of us!

I saw the faces of many Catholics in the mob. Some were crying openly, but many were confused, hopelessly baffled.

Poor things! They did not know what to think, with Communist propaganda so crafty, so persistent. Were we really wolves in sheep's clothing? Did America send us to China as spies? The very fact that we were good to them only made it worse; could it not be a trap? I realized then what Chinese Catholics were going through.

In the ancient days of Roman persecution, the judge said, "Apostatize, or die!" Such a choice was simple, almost easy. But the Chinese Catholics are asked to untangle truth from lies, in a barrage of patriotic propaganda put out by master minds. Small wonder that some of them fail! In the past, and even today, very intelligent people have tripped up on what seems to be very obvious doctrine. Do you marvel that Chinese farmers cannot distinguish the niceties of papal infallibility?

Just before we reached the local jail on the main street, the parade stopped while Mr. Lo and the head of the Home Guard held a whispered conference. The Catholics at the ball field had not been dispersed entirely. As a result, we detoured into the jail for a half hour until it was done.

Soon they led us out to the ball field. Here a table and a few benches formed the judges' stand. We Sisters were told to sit on low wooden horses at one side. Across from us were the accusers on long benches. They were a motley crowd as I looked over the forty of them. Most were quite young. I was not very familiar with Wee Chao people but several of them I knew as lax Catholics. Indeed, one fellow had the cheek to begin his accusation thus:

"I am a Catholic. And you know that Catholics do not lie. Therefore, what I say about the Criminal Ching is true." And he went on with his story, that Father had permitted a dispensation to one man to take a pagan wife, and had refused a dispensation to him. Reasons for the refusal were ignored.

Others said they had been denied the sacraments, never mentioning the variety of reasons such as opium smoking, the taking of a concubine, or some such thing. Another—this man, a pagan—was there to accuse Father of refusing to sell him a certain parcel of church property which Father wished to keep as a basketball court.

One witness, I knew, had been brought all the way from Hong Kong so that he could testify to the buffalo incident of ten years before. I could not pick him out from the crowd, but I knew that

his family lived right behind our convent. The ill-fated buffalo had been munching his dinner in their family's back yard at the time of the incident.

In front, facing the mob, stood Father Ching, a slight, courageous figure bearing the marks of hunger, weakness, long night questionings, and infinite weariness. I saw no obvious signs of torture, but I have no doubt that he had endured it.

The trial began with the inevitable speech:

"The Church has oppressed the people. Now, you, the people, are rising in your new-found power to avenge the wrongs it has done you. The Criminal Ching wants you to be enslaved. He has worked to keep you chained to foreign imperialism.

"But we are liberated now, thanks to Mao Tse-tung. You are free citizens! What shall we do with the Criminal Ching?"

"Kill him! Kill him!" rose like the stench of sulphur over the mob.

"Let us first see what the Criminal Ching has done against us! Let him answer what we have to say!"

Then came the accusations.

The first was that he had spoken against the Agrarian Movement. Father denied this. Then two young fellows raised their hands languidly, saying, "I swear it is so." This statement was enough; Father was declared guilty on that point.

"The Criminal Ching kept a collection basket at the rear of his church. In this way, he extorted money from the poor."

At this, a woman jumped up in the crowd. "He did not extort money from the people!" she said.

The judge was on his feet in an instant. "You are a wealthy landowner. According to the new Constitution of Free China, you have no right to speak."

"I am not a landowner," she said. "I belong to the second category. I have a right to speak."

"There are landowners in your village, so that takes away your right!"

Two guards were at her side by now. They grabbed her, tied

her up with rope and hustled her up to the platform to sit with us. A vile reactionary!

This was dangerous business. The guards began circulating among the spectators looking for any sympathetic facial expression, any gasp at the enormity of the lies, any whispered comment. At the end there were twenty Catholics up with us.

The litany of queer crimes went on—the buffalo shot ten years before, the chicken the dog killed, the woman who should have had tonics, the man who wanted a pagan wife. After each accusation Father tried to speak. Each time he was shouted down with "Kill him! Kill him!"

The mob almost got out of hand several times. They would have torn us to pieces but for the soldiers. As each sympathizer was pushed forward to take his place on the platform with us, the mob went wild. Once, a crippled young man was shoved so that he fell over the bicycle barricade that had been placed behind our bench. Luckily we were there to break his fall.

The trial dragged on for six hours, right through the hot noon period and into the afternoon. The judges retired several times for a glass of something to revive their patriotism, and we had the entr'acts planned by the ever-zealous Youth Corps.

The youth of China sang a parody which we had heard them practice *ad nauseam*. Reciting all the ludicrous charges, each verse ended with something like this:

> He's oh so pious! He will not be
> The father of a family!

The girls came forward now and wagged their fingers coquettishly in his face. The crowd roared with laughter.

Father said and did nothing. He stood in that hot sun for six hours. He was weak from hunger; his last meal had been a bowl of tepid rice gruel at four o'clock the previous afternoon.

A photographer squatted down in front of us to get shots of the criminals on trial. He went over to Father, too, as he stood

there with his eyes on the ground. A woman behind him took hold of his hair and jerked his head up.

"Look pretty for your picture!" she shouted and the mob laughed.

As the hours dragged on, the people became restless. There were mutters of "Let us take care of the criminals! We'll show the running dog of the Americans! The people know what to do with those Americans!" They wanted a good show if they had to spend a whole day in the hot sun.

It was obvious that, if the leaders wanted us to get out alive, they would have to close the trial.

The Home Guard chief stepped forward. He denounced the twenty Catholics taken during the day.

"No doubt," he said, "these are reactionaries. They wish to destroy the smooth running of the People's Court. They, however, are not too much to blame, for they have been instigated by those foreign women." He paused dramatically.

"And that American dog is responsible for all this!" He pointed directly at me.

Me? Why, me? I had had least to do with Wee Chao people. Instinctively, I rose to my feet in defense.

"Sit down and don't talk!" A quick tug on my skirt gave warning. I lowered myself slowly to the wooden horses again.

At last the thing was over. We were led from the ball field to the village jail again. Here the judges had a good lunch and cursorily examined the twenty Catholics. All but one were dismissed after a "brain washing" designed to wash out reactionary ideas. They were placed on the black list in their respective villages, however, and from then on were watched very closely.

The one left was the courageous woman who had defended Father on the extortion charge. In the procession back to our convent, she followed Father, bound with ropes as he was.

The way home was lined with the usual courtesies. We were pelted with dirt, small stones, and mud. I remember feeling a

soft wet ball hit my cheek; it was a wad of chewed-up sugar cane, fresh from somebody's mouth.

At the convent, from our upper windows, we watched Father Ching standing in the courtyard waiting for his guards to take him to the city jail. Prisoners were being moved from the church building to a new jail that had just been completed. Father Ching would go directly there.

He was a sorry figure. Dirty, ink-stained, smeared from head to foot, in ragged pajamas and filthy sneakers, he trembled from hunger and weakness. Mr. Lo had just brought us upstairs. He too was at the window. He turned to us and pointed with scorn saying, "Behold your priest!"

I gasped. It was "Ecce Homo!" almost to the letter.

They had a victory party over in the church that night. Everything had been moved out—benches, statues, the altar, holy water fonts, everything—except one thing. The crucifix, too heavy and too high to get down easily, hung in silent rebuke at the wild orgy. The Communists did not care. To them, it symbolized the death of the Catholic Church; so much the better!

Not all the cotton we stuffed in our ears nor the blankets piled over our heads kept out the wild shouts and screams. The filthy songs, the vile language, the use of Father Ching's name in horrible jokes, seeped through and made the night hideous.

The peak of the party was a mock funeral for Father. They wailed a dirge and followed it by wild outbursts of laughter. Our Lord on His cross had listened to the prayers of earnest Catholics in that church; here He had come to the hearts of little children and of old grannies; here His Body and Blood had been raised to His Almighty Father; here He had heard His priest forgive the sins of hundreds as they came from distant villages to celebrate the feasts.

As He looked down on that drunken rout, I wonder if He did not think of the rabble on Calvary enjoying a holiday execution while the soldiers played dice for His clothes. His lips must have formed the words again, "Father forgive them, they know not

what they are doing." I know that four Maryknoll Sisters prayed this as we lay sleepless, reviewing a Day of Sublime Honor.

Two days later, Father was sentenced on three of the counts to one year at hard labor. Mrs. Plum explained the reason for this apparent leniency. "The villagers wanted another trial. 'He did not confess to his crimes!' they said. But the police would not permit it. They figure they can sentence him to one year now, on three of the charges. Then, you watch, when the year is up, they will sentence him on a few more charges. They can keep him in jail indefinitely, that way."

True enough! Before the year was out, this is what happened:

One night a new prisoner was brought into the jail. The guard asked, "Will anyone share his bed board with this new prisoner?"

Father was always generous. Furthermore, he was near-sighted and had no glasses in jail. He offered to move over and give the newcomer place beside him.

Only when he was grabbed, tied up, and thoroughly cuffed did he realize that it was a woman they had brought into the men's section. Six months was added to his term for "intended immorality."

Strange, the ways of justice! A week or so after our Day of Honor, Mrs. Plum brought us a very nice head of cabbage.

"It's a gift from K'i Fong," she explained.

"That man? Why he's the one brought from Hong Kong to testify about the buffalo," Sister Alice Ann exclaimed.

"Yes, I know. He sent his little daughter-in-law with this cabbage for you, for a New Year's gift."

Was he trying to say he was sorry? Only God knows. If so, he did not have much time for repentance. He turned his place into an opium den and, within a day or so, it was raided. Two men were hustled off to jail. K'i Fong would have been taken too (he was under arrest) but he was too far gone with the drug.

He was dying; they let him remain in his own room but under custody. Within a week, he was dead.

A second accuser, another opium dealer from farther away, died soon after. Crying piteously for the Last Sacraments, in mortal fear of meeting his Judge without them, he died without a priest. How eagerly Father Ching would have gone to him if he had been free! A third was gone in another month; he was a pagan we did not know at all.

The other thirty-seven must have begun to wonder when their sins would catch up with them.

ELEVEN

The Fellow Behind It All

Now we come to Miss TNT.

She was our major worry after the trial. TNT were the initials of her name. I have even forgotten what it was; we never called her anything else but Miss TNT.

We were still cooped up in three small rooms of our convent, with the large room downstairs serving as the Youth Corps headquarters for the district. Not only could we hear every word from below, but a knothole hidden under that "luxurious" straw mat gave us a view of what Stalin's little helpers were concocting. We did not have much trouble keeping in touch with village activities.

Their immediate concern during the weeks right after Father Ching's trial was collecting evidence for a similar trial for Sister Adelaide and Sister Vera. Sister Alice Ann and I were to be guilty by concomitance, apparently.

A day or so after the trial, a new strident voice rose through the knothole; Sister Adelaide knew it well. Two years before, she had started classes in reading and writing to help the farm women round about gain a little education. TNT attended the classes and learned fairly well. She seemed very grateful and friendly but it was pretty obvious that she was an opportunist, a band-wagon jumper. Nevertheless, at her request, she had been given a rosary and some books.

Right now, of course, she was an all-out enthusiast for our "benevolent" Government. As a public act of retraction of the Faith she turned in her prayerbook, catechism, and rosary. It was not in vain. She was made president of a group of ten families. She spied on them very competently, inventing here and embroidering there, and eventually became respected in high quarters. She could usually be counted on to have something to report on somebody.

Miss TNT was really not a member of the Youth Corps, but was there to collaborate with the young students in drawing up the evidence against us.

"What evidence can you get against these foreign women?" they asked her.

She had nothing much to offer. "I heard the head one [Sister Adelaide] say that it is not good to be a Communist."

That was one thing, but they wanted a whole list of crimes.

TNT could think of nothing more herself but she put her nose to the trail and sniffed. The next morning she brought in seven Catholic women. They were terribly scared, we could see that. But Lien Fa, a sturdy Catholic with a real Christian sense of humor, led them. She nodded solemnly as TNT launched the attack.

"These foreign devils, these imperialists, these American dogs, these oppressors of the poor, they have come to Wee Chao and fattened off the sweat of us common people. They don't grow their own rice; they never work in the fields. They say prayers all the time to a God Who is not Chinese."

"Right you are!" piped up Lien Fa.

"Oh my, yes!" murmured the others.

"We will have our revenge! We'll show them who owns China! We will repay them for what they have done to us."

"That's right! Repay them!" from Lien Fa. "Give them a taste of their own treatment!"

"That's fair! That's right!"

TNT was pleased with herself. Things were going along swimmingly.

"You're smart women," she told them. "I'll report to my superior how cooperative you are. We want to bring these foreign devils to a public trial. We'll show them real Chinese justice."

"We're right with you there," spoke up Lien Fa. "That's just what they should get—real Chinese justice!"

But when it came to specific accusations, the meeting bogged down.

Did we ever cheat them? No.

How about our servants; did *they* ever have sharp words with anybody? That could be accredited to us, too. Well, no, not that anyone remembered.

Any argument over property? Any unfairness in religion classes? A scolding of somebody's child, perhaps? Favoritism in giving out Christmas play roles?

A bright idea! Surely the Sisters had come to treat a child and it had died afterward?

Miss TNT began to lose her composure. "Rack your brains!" she urged them. "You've been parishioners here for years and years! Surely you know the crimes they have committed. Think! Go back years and years! Remember what your parents suffered at their hands. It doesn't have to be what *they* did; just what any Sisters did to you!"

Lien Fa was a picture. Her brows knit together and her mouth twisted in strenuous thought. "I hate them; they're awful; they're vile! To think of such people pretending to teach us the true religion! But it's funny! I just can't think of a thing!"

In despair, TNT dismissed them.

There were other sessions of the same sort down there. In the end, thanks be to God, TNT had to drop this idea for mere lack of evidence.

All of this took several weeks. In the meantime, we had plenty of material for meditation on what we could look forward to if

the public trial were to come off. After the church had been cleared out of prisoners, it was made a general utility building for the police. Here were held the public trials. Between times it served as torture chamber and auction room.

A scaffolding was set up at the sanctuary gate. Here victims were suspended by the wrists and tortured for hours on end. Their cries and moans, the sound of lashes, screams, and curses made days and nights hideous. We avoided the windows because, through the open church windows, we could see the victims bound in chains, a placard of their crimes hung around their necks, and white dunce caps set on their heads. Often, back and shoulders were raw and bleeding from the lash.

There was absolutely nothing we could do about it, and yet how could one read, study, mend, or clean when a fellow mortal was in agony? At night we piled pillows and clothes over our ears to shut out the noise. But by day we could try only to ignore it.

One night a woman was held in the Youth Corps rooms below us. She moaned all night in agony. We twisted and turned in agony above her; we could do nothing to help.

Confiscated goods taken from wealthy landowners were auctioned off at the foot of the crucifix. Our Lord hung there in silent rebuke for a month or more. But fuel was low one night and soldiers chopped the crucifix up for firewood to cook their supper.

At any time of the day or night, a shrill whistle might blow. This meant trouble somewhere. The Home Guard would run pell-mell for their guns and be off on the hunt. The Youth Corps found this great sport. They were always eager to track down a suspected person or "vile reactionary" or "running dog" or some such "enemy of the people." It was quite a feather in a Youth's cap to find such a person in the neighborhood.

A lot of screaming and running around woke us up one night. The whistle blew; the armed guard rushed out; the boys and girls stopped their nightly party and joined the fun. The next morning, we heard the story.

A neighbor had been on his way to the church to attend a Farmer's Association meeting. En route he passed a women's indoctrination class where his daughter-in-law was supposed to be studying. There wasn't much studying being done, for the young teacher was making free with his pupils, especially with the daughter-in-law. The old man spoke his mind half aloud as he stood there in the dark outside the lighted window. All the reserves that China had built up around the man-and-woman relationship were falling to the ground.

Someone inside heard him. "Old man Li is speaking against the Government!" They rushed out, grabbed him, and brought him inside before the assembly.

"How am I against the Government?" he asked. "I am against immorality!"

"This night school is a Government-sponsored program. That makes you against the Government and a vile reactionary."

He was tied up and hustled off to jail under guard. Two weeks later, his brother signed papers to go bail for him. He was released but could not partake in any village affairs; he was completely ostracized. A dangerous character, truly!

This is the tragedy of China—that a people who were sober, hard-working, and always a bit on the contemplative side, should have suddenly gone crazy, so that they must have a witches' brew of hate to swallow every few days. A saturnalia of vengeance, some orgy of bitter retaliation, had to be on the books or Party leaders harangued the people that they were slipping, not making progress, unworthy of the New China.

The wealthy landowners were the choicest victims. Each was tried by mob at least four times. From our vantage point upstairs we heard the preparations for each trial. Mr. Lo put it very well when he said in a speech:

"The first trial is to skin them."

"The second trial is to slice the meat."

"The third trial picks their bones."

"At the fourth, we scoop out the marrow."

Eleven landowners in our town knew the truth of that. After four trials, they were separated into two classes: those who had used force to keep their lands, and those who had not. Four of them were judged to have used force. They were executed shortly after the fourth trial. The other seven were held for further trials. One of these cheated the Government. After a whole day of sadistic torture in the church, he hanged himself that night in his prison cell.

We got to know the routine of these public trials. Most of them were held either in the church or, in fine weather, on the lawn sloping down from the convent. Attendance was compulsory. Each household and organization was obliged to send representatives. School children were used to fill out the ranks and to add volume to the abuse and heckling. Often people had to stop work in the fields and offices so that there would be a strong "People's voice" to write to Peiping about. Guards were always on hand to ensure that these great volunteer audiences would not slip off for home before the last sting of the lash and the last cry for blood.

Witnesses were well trained. I shall always remember one old woman who spent hours in that room downstairs memorizing her lines and coordinating the actions—a kick in the shins here, a poke in the eye there.

Mimeographed sheets were distributed to the masses telling them what to yell and at what time. "Kill!" "Shoot!" "Death!" "Skin him alive!" Each phrase had a proper time to be heard.

The judges were important Communists, local Politburo men and women; there were about four or five of them. The people themselves were the jury.

A parade to round up attendance started the program. Taken from jail, the victims started the Via Dolorosa to the trial grounds. Hands and legs were roped. A special halter ran around the neck and down between the shoulderblades to the waist. A guard kept one hand on the neck rope so that he could twist it if the prisoner walked too fast or too slow. A festoon of signs

hung around each victim, labeling him "landlord" or "bully" or "reactionary" or whatever his status was. Besides the poor fellow who was to be the main dish for the day, other prisoners were brought along, just to give them a foretaste of what was in store for them.

Once on the platform, the accused knelt facing the crowds. He must bow his head quite low and remain in that position for hours. Any attempt to raise his head or to look out at the crowds was rewarded with a slap across the face. Usually, he bent lower and lower as the witnesses beat him with poles and bamboo bats and kicked him freely. At the end, he groveled on all fours.

Toward the beginning of these public trials for landlords, the accused had enough spunk to call out "No!" when each accusation was read out. But at the later trials, they muttered "Yes" to everything.

The whole business preyed on my mind. The Chinese are kindly. They have keen minds, and a sense of humor. In eleven years of intimate contact with them, I thought I knew them well.

Yet here they were, permitting themselves to be forced into a nightmare of bloodshed, of ghoulish torture of their fellowmen, by a handful of rabid hatemongers. Couldn't they see how ridiculous these charges were? Couldn't they rise up and put a stop to it all?

Why should they hate so? The answer is: because they are being trained by the supreme master of hate. We hear of Communism as "a religion of hate," as opposed to Christianity as "a religion of love." We are tempted to think of this as a catch phrase. But it is the stark, simple truth.

The Youth Corps was always swarming through our three rooms. We were forbidden to bar the door against anyone; the boys and girls knew it and came in on us at all hours. In ordinary times we would welcome them, talk freely, and show them all the interesting things from America. But not now. Each of those little Stalinists had one purpose—to get evidence against us.

I remember particularly a boy of twelve or so, straight in body, intelligent, clean-cut, not too bad in manners. He reminded me of my nephew in America—but with this difference. Our Tommy was always alert for a victim on whom to bestow his "good deed for the day." Confirmation was coming soon and Sister in school urged him on to loving God through his neighbor. Tommy worked hard at it.

But this boy in Wee Chao! The same sharp mind, the same diligence as Tommy, but with a wild fanaticism of hate in his eyes that turned me cold. Boylike, he could not hide his purpose. "What can I report? How can I get her into trouble?" ran through his mind continually.

Suppose, in America, we taught hate systematically in our schools. Suppose, instead of Be Kind to Animals Week, we celebrated Kill Off the Aged Week. Suppose we ripped from our school readers all the stories about Johnny helping an old lady across the street and substituted ones in which he informed against an old neighbor because she hoarded a sack of rice. Suppose instead of Roger going to the State Fair and winning a blue ribbon on his calf, the storybooks told of his attending a public trial and coming up with a piece of evidence that clinched an execution. Suppose children wrote compositions on "How I can Help My Village Get Rid of Capitalists"—and did homework on the American Sisters down the street.

Can you picture the result in even one year? The boys and girls would grow strong in hate. Like a pack of wolves they would watch at home and everywhere for the first slip, the first off-the-Party-line remark, to close in on a victim with fangs bared.

This boy in Wee Chao was a good example. He loved nobody, not even himself. If ever he committed the sin of compassionating a reactionary or an enemy of the people, he would force himself to write a blubbering "confession." He would stoically take the punishment accorded, too. The spirit of sacrifice burns in the youth of China today, but at the wrong altar.

Thus, it appears that China will pass one day from this era

when Communism must be imposed by force, to a later stage in which it will send fervent missionaries of hate all over the world.

The children! Oh, the children of China! Hardly have they started to school when you see their eyes grow narrow with spying and their chins thrust out in hate. Their power to love first, and then their reason, convulses and dies. Only the twisted bitter roots show in certain phrases and words. "Loyalty" means telling everything you can against your family and neighbors. "Truth" means the Party line only. "To be honest and frank" is to write out a lying confession.

But even these are not used often. The favorite words are "Revenge!" "Pay Back!" "Strike!" "Kill!" He is surely out of place here—He Who said, "Love thy neighbor. Do good to them that hate you. Turn the other cheek. If a man takes your coat, give him also your cloak."

China's religion today is not mere paganism, man's fumbling between right and wrong, guided only by his own muddled brains.

This is Satanism, a superintelligent force of pure evil.

TWELVE

Day to Day

Excitement is one thing—public trials on the front lawn, torture chambers next door, police and soldiers and spying Youth Corps members everywhere—but how did one live? After all, one must eat and sleep and wear clothes and keep the house clean. What about the day-to-day existence of those months in Wee Chao before my arrest?

We had another huge search and investigation the day after the trial. Everything possible was inventoried down to the last common pin. The men went through our bureau drawers and suitcases counting handkerchiefs, underwear, collars and cuffs, and stockings. At the end, every can of food, every extra piece of clothing, and most of the furnishings were stacked in a back room. Only one chair for each of us, a table, bedding, and (of all things) an ironing board were left out for our use. The pictures came off the walls; the straw mat was taken up from the floor; all kerosene cans were stored. However, we saved a statue of Our Lady; also, oddly enough, the typewriter.

There was quite a discussion about the typewriter among some who did not know what it was.

"It's a machine for writing English," explained Mr. Ma, whose name means "horse." And just to prove his superior knowledge he sat down and began to peck out the few words of English he knew.

"You know English!" Sister Vera exclaimed. "How clever you are!"

Mr. Horse was pleased that she recognized his words as English. "I am learning it," he said, "because I intend to go to America shortly."

This *was* a surprise. "When do you expect to go?" Sister asked innocently.

"Very soon. We will go to liberate America."

Sister gulped but managed to keep a straight face. Fortunately, the conversation withdrew attention from the typewriter.

I pleaded for food. "It's necessary for us to have that food," I said.

"Rice, salt, and lard are the only really necessary foods," Mr. Lo told me. "You don't need any of those cans."

Sister Alice Ann was aghast to find that all toothpaste and soap were to be sealed in the back room, too. She was more successful than I.

"You may use the soap and toothpaste, but only sparingly," they told her.

This business took all day. At nightfall, a weary handful of men requested the whites of several eggs. With this smeared over thin paper, they sealed the door of that back room and forbade us to use any supplies therein.

The next day, bright and early, they were back again.

"What do you intend to do now?" Mr. Lo asked.

"Is it up to us?" we asked.

I think he wanted to take over the convent. As head of the village, he would gain prestige with higher-ups if he could report one more building entirely occupied by the People's Government.

"You may apply for travel permits," he said.

We held a consultation. Without priest, Mass, or sacraments, there was little point in staying at Wee Chao. Being Americans, we were only a danger to our good Chinese Catholics.

"We would like to go to Kim Chang to be with our Sisters there," we requested.

Mr. Lo laughed. "Don't be silly!" he said. "They're worse off than you are. I wouldn't even bother to ask for that. Pick some other place."

In the end, the only place he would permit us to apply for was Hong Kong. He knew right along that we would be forced to request permission to leave China. He had the blanks in his pocket.

Now he pulled them out and we began our paper work for the Government again. Life history in detail, education, family, occupations of relatives, residences and dates of any change, our reasons for applying filled many pages. At last they were done. Mr. Lo collected them, stuffed them into his pocket, and went off.

Thinking it would be a matter of days or weeks at most, we began planning the trip. We might have saved our breath. It was a year later that Sister Adelaide and Sister Alice Ann were finally able to leave Wee Chao. By then, Sister Vera and I were both in jails far away.

Nevertheless, we tried to settle down to some sort of routine. We had a period in the morning for Chinese language study; definite times for mending, cleaning, and cooking; a recreation hour; special prayer times spaced through the day. It was a comfort to know that, deprived of a church and priest, we could still help our parish by prayer and sacrifice.

We became proficient at housebreaking. At eight cents a day each for food, even Mrs. Plum could not buy enough for four. How galling it was to sit down to a mere scrap of a meal while our own cans were sitting in the room next door, barred from us by only a thin sheet of paper and a bit of egg-white paste.

This did not last long. Sister Vera had ideas.

"I'll bet I could get that paper off the door and seal it back again without anybody being the wiser," she said.

That night, when the Youth Corps was having a loud party downstairs, her nimble fingers edged toward the door jamb, carefully prying up the seal little by little. At last the door could swing open and we knew we were successful burglars.

In stocking feet and carrying two empty tins which we had fortunately saved, we moved toward the small pile of cheese cans.

"Don't take the top one," Sister Vera whispered. "It's dusty. They'll know we took some if the dust is disturbed."

I carefully lifted the top one while Sister put the two empty cans in place of the next two full ones. Then we replaced the top one carefully.

We poured the baking powder out of a small can and filled it with talcum powder. Then, since all was going well, we emptied the base of several kerosene lamps also stored there, and thus got two good cups of kerosene.

Powdered milk, coffee, and cocoa were also filched from the store. Egg white was smeared on the paper again and it stuck. We trusted our guardian angels to make the seal look untouched.

The next problem was to find a hiding place for the cans we had taken out. Mrs. Plum solved that the next morning.

"Give them to me," she said abruptly. "I'll keep them in my coffin."

Every Chinese fears a destitute death. Nearly every old lady in Wee Chao had her coffin bought and paid for. Usually it rested up in the eaves of her house until it would be needed. Mrs. Plum's idea was perfect; we kept our stores in her coffin.

One morning, Sister Adelaide found inactivity getting on her nerves. She surveyed the kitchen floor with disdain.

"It must be years since this floor had an honest New England scrubbing," she said. "I'm going to remedy that right now!"

One good swing of her brush way under a big cabinet sent something hard and heavy flying across the room. It was a can of cheese! At the first investigation a month before, our cook

had evidently secreted it and forgot to tell us about it. A few days later I was cleaning the ashes out of the brick stove. This also was a job not done too often. In the ashes I found another can of cheese, well puffed from the heat. It was good, though, and we thanked God for the cook's secretiveness.

A few loose boards under my bed mat were the entrance to our "floor-board cabinet." We had smuggled a few things there, too. Sister Adelaide was handy with a hammer. She would start hammering furiously repairing a chair or table while one of us pried up the floor boards and the other two kept guard.

The secret stores were certainly our salvation. If we had subsisted entirely on the allotted eight cents a day, I do not think I could have survived the starvation I later underwent in prison.

So much for food. The water situation was worse.

A wall surrounded the convent property marking it off from the rest of the mission compound. The wall ran through the upper part of the well which served the whole compound. Convent water was drawn from one side; the priest and catechist had used the other side. After the trial, of course, soldiers and officials living in the rectory shared the well with us.

Things went along fairly well for a month or so. Every morning and evening we took turns with the heavy buckets and drew water sufficient for the day.

One morning the commander of the soldiers stationed there called on us.

"Have you a cover for your side of the well?" he asked.

We had, and got it for him—a large wooden cover which fitted snuggly over our half. Since we had no animals on our side and never permitted dirt to be thrown in, we had not used it.

"Please keep the well covered," the commander urged. "This is for sanitary reasons." Very well. We put on the cover.

The next morning another delegation of soldiers came to the well armed with cement, boards, rocks, and tools. They let us draw four buckets of water and then told us to leave. "We are going to work on the well," they explained.

"How nice!" we thought. "They are going to clean the well for us!"

But from our upstairs window we watched with sinking hearts as they nailed the cover down. Then rocks were placed on top, and the whole top was cemented over. Even the well was sealed!

Where could we get water?

"You may draw water from the other side of your own well," the commander explained. "You will have to walk around the wall and get the water from our side. Do it at ten-thirty every morning. A guard will be there to supervise it."

Every day, then, we went through a ceremony. Two of us with buckets, a 20-foot piece of rope, and a small drawing pail went all around the wall and up the other side to the well. The other two kept guard at the house. It was a real bucket brigade! One filled a bucket at the well, another carried it to the door, the third took it up the stairs, and the fourth emptied it into the water jar and passed the empty bucket back.

It took an hour of heavy labor each day to carry the water all that distance. We could not imagine why our half had been sealed since it was exactly the same water as before.

After some time the commander found it troublesome to have a guard stationed at the well to watch us. He said, "Let Mrs. Plum draw the water for you, we can trust her."

That afternoon a grinning Mrs. Plum came balancing two brimming buckets on a shoulder pole.

"Such people!" she said. "The ideas they have! You'd think they'd be ashamed to think such thoughts! Can you imagine, Sisters, the soldiers are afraid that you will poison the well to kill them. That's why your side is sealed."

There had been many cases of poisoning among the Comrades during the past two weeks. Every one of them was on edge. About forty executions had just taken place. Two of these were ten-year-old children accused of carrying poison; they were shot in the streets in town.

We knew then why the Northern soldiers themselves were

transporting rice from the Government granary behind our convent. Prisoners and local soldiers had been doing this work before.

The mail was another headache. Our little friends down below in the Youth Corps meeting room read our letters long before we did. Indeed, sometimes we got a garbled version through the floor boards.

Our mail was directed to Mr. Lo as head of our village. As often as not, it passed through the Youth Corps so that they could practice their Chinese characters on it. Any letter in English was thoroughly digested by people like Mr. Horse who were avid to perfect their English before going to the states on a conquering expedition. The letters were passed around for everyone to enjoy thoroughly before they came back to Mr. Lo. After several weeks in his pocket they were handed to us. By that time, we had a pretty good idea of what was in them.

After a month or so, however, Mr. Lo pronounced a dictum: "You may not receive or send mail, except for one letter to your parents. This letter must pass through our hands for censorship."

We lost the typewriter not long after. One of the soldiers who had assisted in sealing our belongings in the back room came back after a month or so to collect a few things he wanted. He took out an old-fashioned Victrola and the records, some bicycle parts, and a Coleman lamp. Then his eye caught the typewriter which had not been sealed. He wanted that, too.

"What right have you to take these things?" Sister Adelaide asked him.

He showed her a paper from Mr. Lo. It permitted him to confiscate "anything of a dangerous character."

"What's dangerous about bicycle parts or a lamp, or that old Victrola?" we demanded.

"You could construct a radio sending-set out of these materials," he said. "*She* could." He pointed to Sister Alice Ann, who was handy with tools. She had just made an oven of sorts out of

an old kerosene tin. "Anyway, we have to protect your property for you."

He had the cheek to ask Sister how to operate the pressure lamp. Sister spent twenty minutes showing him how to pump it, to light it, to regulate the flame, etc. Then, just as she lowered the cover, she put her finger through the mantle. He probably never knew why it would not work for him. Even if he did know, there wasn't another mantle this side of the Hong Kong border.

At that time, the only thing we were really sorry to lose was the typewriter, for nobody else in Wee Chao could use it. But by midnight, we were regretting the Victrola, too.

We could hear the guards heavily "protecting" it all night. Record after record was ground out fortissimo. There were old popular songs, sent by relatives or friends in the States under the impression that missioners in China like to sit around and listen to "Margie" and "Silver Threads Among the Gold." Gregorian Masses, too—really valuable records which we used to teach our Christians something of the Church's liturgy. It was all one to the soldiers, of course. They were just tickled to hear the sound coming out of the box.

After that, the seal on that back door was lifted as often by Government men as by us. In a way, we weren't sorry; the seal became quite messy-looking and nobody could tell whether we or the soldiers had been the burglars. They never were interested in our food; Chinese can't bear the smell of cheese, for one thing.

I remember one pompous little fellow going through the back room, now pretty well rifled of anything valuable. He had picked up a harmonica and was tentatively blowing on it. He liked it. Thinking there might be another one around, he started digging into a case of cheese, throwing the cans on the floor.

"What's the matter?" I asked, just to tease him. "Don't you like cheese? It's very nutritious. People in America grow big and tall from eating cheese."

He drew himself up to his full 4 feet 10½ inches.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked, and went on. "I am a Chinese, a citizen of the new Communist China. Do you know who you are?"

"I ought to by now," I murmured.

"You are an imperialistic American devil. There can be no comparison between us."

As he stuffed the harmonica into his pocket, I thought, "All right, my little friend, let's divide the spoils. You keep the harmonica and I'll stay with the cheese!"

Sister Vera woke us one night with a raging toothache. We were all getting cavities. However, Mr. Lo merely smiled at repeated requests to see a dentist.

Mrs. Plum, that morning, took one look at Sister Vera and went out in a hurry. She returned with a bottle of Chinese medicine,

INSTANT CURE FOR TEN THOUSAND TOOTHACHES

I don't know whether we had ten thousand of them, but the Instant Cure worked for every toothache from then on. We soaked bits of old cloth in it and packed the cavities.

When Sister Adelaide became sick, Mrs. Plum brought back three different kinds of Chinese medicines.

"The seller told me, 'If it's malaria, then take No. 1; if it's vomiting, use No. 2; if it's dysentery, take No. 3.' " With no further diagnosis, Sister pulled through all right.

After the fall of Ng Fout Fa, we had orders to admit no one to our upstairs rooms, except Mr. Lo and Mrs. Plum. It was a blessing, of course, and we were grateful, but it caused several terrifying incidents.

Curiosity seekers at first resented it when we said, "You may not come in, by order of the village head," but they soon went away grumbling.

Not so the soldiers from the North. Newly arrived, they

wanted to see the American women on the premises and would not take "No" for an answer. They did their best to break down the door.

We did not mind local soldiers so much, but the Northerners spoke a different dialect. Even the local people feared them; we were worried. It only infuriated them to explain our orders.

"Who is more important," they wanted to know, "the head of your little village or our army officer?"

One night a crowd of them hammered on the door downstairs. We put everything we could think of against that door. Then we prayed.

One of them said, "I'll get in a window and open the door for the rest of you."

So they pried up a window and he slipped in. Soon they were all inside and running up the stairs, only to be confronted by another door at the top.

We went to the window and called loudly to the prison guards for help, blowing our whistles at the same time. They were hesitant about coming but they thought they had better keep the peace—or rather, what was left of it by then.

Two of them tried to explain the regulations to the soldiers. After a lot of talking on the guards' part and a great many Hail Mary's on ours, the Northerners left in a surly mood.

At about this time we received a note smuggled out of prison. It was from Father Ching:

"Pax Christi! The good Lord wills and His Most Holy Will be done that we suffer a little for our sins. Our Lord, guiltless, remained a prisoner for nine months in the womb of His Most Blessed Mother. Later, He was incognito in Nazareth. Hence a few years, if God wills it, in this earthly prison is not a little too much.

"Do not try to contact or help me. We are all being closely watched.

I am always tempted, in writing or speaking of these times, to

tell the many wonderful ways our Catholics proved themselves to be Christ-bearers. I would like to say how and when we received the Blessed Sacrament and to give public recognition to the heroism of those who secured it for us.

However, there is danger that people might be traced and that a careless word in America might bring hardship to brave souls in China. The tricks they used, if laid open to public inspection, could not be used again.

Suffice it to say that we did have the Blessed Sacrament with us, concealed in the base of the statue of Our Lady. Whenever anyone came into our quarters, our unwritten rule was that the Sister nearest the statue would slip it into a special pocket made in our habits for this very purpose. Many and many a time, I had the privilege of carrying Our Lord on my person all the afternoon while soldiers and the Youth Corps roamed through our rooms searching or just "rubbernecking."

We all look back with pleasure on one special day during those three months after the public trial.

We asked Mr. Lo about the travel permits one morning, and whether our money allowance could be increased. Also we wanted to put in a plea about getting mail, or at least being able to write to relieve our families' anxiety.

"I'm too busy to bother with those things," he said crossly. Then, on a sudden he suggested, "Why don't you go yourselves to the district police and ask? Two of the Youth Corps can go along to guard you. Frankly, I can't be bothered with your affairs any longer."

We were overjoyed. Sister Adelaide put the Blessed Sacrament into her special pocket. We collected two Youth Corps boys downstairs and set out for a half-hour walk on a beautiful spring day. What a joy to put one foot in front of the other! Three rooms holding four people can make you long for just a good piece of road to walk on.

In town, the office was closed but we found the district head

in his home nearby. When we mentioned Ng Fout Fa's name, he said quickly, "That man never had any authority. He was merely willing to run errands for me." I thought, "That's gratitude for you!"

Our money, he insisted, was not restricted; we could have all we asked for. But we could not receive or send any mail. As for the supplies in the back room, he would permit us to get summer clothing when the warmer weather came but we could not have any of the kerosene stored there.

The interview, then, was half successful, half not. We would keep our fingers crossed about getting more money for food. But with light hearts and sheer enjoyment of sunshine and a bit of freedom, we set out for home again.

The young guards stopped at a sidewalk stall to buy sweets. Nobody told us to stop so we walked on. Just around the corner, who should come along but a fine Catholic woman whom we had not seen for months. She was so excited! She tried to give us everything she had.

"I'm on my way to visit a friend," she said. "Here are four eggs and a piece of salt pork I was taking to her." She insisted that we accept the gift. Then she poured out her entire pouch of money holding back just enough to pay her bicycle fare home. In a moment, she had hopped on the bicycle and was gone.

The whole day, from Mr. Lo's surprising suggestion in the morning to the bit of salt pork for supper in the evening, was a wonderful lift to our spirits. I'm sure that God planned it that way for us. He knew we needed something to break the tension.

THIRTEEN

We Lose One

"A present for you from Mrs. Lam, down the street."

Mrs. Plum pulled from her pocket a newspaper packet containing just about ten lima beans.

Thoughtfully, I unwrapped them and tossed the paper away. Strange! A gift of so few beans! In a second, I dove into the wastebasket and pulled out the bit of newspaper. Yes, it was important. A scrap from the Kim Chang daily paper, it told of Father Langemann, whom we had seen under investigation three months before.

"Criminal Langemann, identified as a dangerous American spy, has been carefully investigated by top Government agents for the past three months. New evidence of his crimes against the People's Government comes to light every day."

Three days after we read this news, a group of six special investigators came from Kim Chang. They singled out Sister Vera. She had known Father Langemann for many years.

"You. You sit here."

They placed a chair in the middle of the room. She sat on it. Four of them stood against the walls. The leader, an English-speaking investigator from Peiping, and the secretary seated themselves at the table. We three other Sisters were banished into

the next room. The door was closed and a couple of Youths from downstairs were posted to keep us in.

From early morning until noon, fully three hours, they fired questions at her. We could not hear much but what we heard was all about Father Langemann. Most of the time, Sister repeated, "I do not know that. That is not my business. You must ask Father for that information."

We prayed to St. Joseph to protect her. We asked Our Blessed Mother to comfort her. We implored the Holy Ghost to enlighten her. They must have answered our prayers for, as the session ended, the Peiping investigator said to the secretary, as he wiped his brow, "She is a woman of seven intelligences! We will have to stop for a rest now."

Joyfully we fixed up a little lunch for ourselves. The men stayed around relieving each other for dinner, so we did not talk much. We had barely finished when the Peiping man returned. He made us a speech.

"One of you Sisters has deceived the Government," he said. "She shall be punished. We are not certain yet whether or not the other three are implicated in her crime." Then he beckoned to Sister Vera. She followed him out of the room, and down the stairs.

"Sit here," he ordered and pointed to a bench at the door.

Across the yard, we had a little shack of sorts used only when people came from great distances for feast days and had no place in the town to stay overnight. It was watertight and good enough for an overnight stay, but the walls were damp. In the months since we had been kept upstairs, it had fared badly.

We could see a woman now sweeping out this shack. She removed everything from it, old baskets, a leaking bucket, some bicycle parts, a few old flower pots, and the remains of stage scenery used in religious plays from time to time. Then two wooden horses and two bed boards were placed inside.

"Go in," the Peiping man commanded.

Sister Vera entered her solitary confinement cell. The key

turned. The window and doors were closed. Paper was pasted over the window except for a peephole left for the guards. A single electric light bulb hung from the rooftree. It must have been on day and night, for at any hour when I woke in the three weeks after that, I could see it gleaming through that peephole. Against the lighted paper, guards marched back and forth day and night.

Half our hearts had been torn out. We three, up there in those three rooms, could see just enough to make us sick with fear. We knew that she was being hounded to write "her story," one of those silly driveling confessions that no one believed, about things that never happened. We could see the Peiping man standing over her, shouting and waving his pistol. They left the door open, sometimes, when he was there.

"Write! Write!" he shouted again and again.

And sometimes she did write, but it was never the confession he wanted. And she would go through the same browbeating.

Several times, too, she was taken out to town for questioning. She passed us, as we stood there at the window, and tried to be encouraging, but often she seemed very depressed. We did not know what happened to her at the police headquarters.

Every morning she had to clean her shack, sweeping it out thoroughly and bringing in a bucket of water. Purposely, she dragged out these household duties so that we could see her and she could see us.

We tried to send her food. Sister Adelaide was reckless with our food supplies, her heart in agony that she could not help Sister in any other way. But we never dared to try to send a message; every bit of the food we sent was reduced to crumbs before she got it. The guards' heavy hands pawed through everything.

Two or three times a week, Sister was permitted to carry a bucket of water to a small room downstairs with a cement floor and there she could take a bath. Guards inspected the place minutely before and after she used it.

The walls were whitewashed, however, and Sister used a pin to scratch a message, once, "Great danger. Pray," hoping that the guards would not notice it. They didn't, but sharp-eyed Mrs. Plum did. She copied the letters exactly, for she knew only Chinese characters and not many of those. Out of her queer pencil marks, we made out the message.

Sister Vera had been in solitary confinement for about two weeks when Mrs. Plum came in with bad news one morning. "There's an exhibit in town," she said. "It's all about Father Langemann, to show what a criminal he is."

The Communist system of transferring a prisoner from one place to another usually included a huge public demonstration in any town he would pass through. To whip up enthusiasm against him, newspapers (if there were any in the towns) began advance publicity about a week ahead. A traveling exhibit consisting of a bulletin board showing the villain and the evidence of his crimes preceded him by three or four days. Set up in a public spot, the exhibit was a "must" for everybody from school children up. This is part of the Communists' systematic education in hate.

"The biggest thing on the board"—Mrs. Plum continued—"is Father Langemann's picture. Two horns have been painted on his head. Around it are pictures of landowners they say he hid at the Catholic mission in Kim Chang and lists of crimes he is accused of having committed against the People's Government."

There was a notebook alongside the exhibit too, where visitors could jot down their impressions. Not many people wrote anything, Mrs. Plum said, but somebody put down his ideas on the whole affair. "I never knew this criminal," he wrote, "but no one man could be so bad."

We had hopes, though, that when the Criminal Langemann had passed through, pressure on Sister Vera would be let up. Perhaps she would come back to us. It is so much easier to suffer in company.

But we were horrified a few days later to see Sister brought out from her cell and told to stand between two guards. Another soldier went over to the well and brought out a filthy, wet rope. He advanced toward Sister evidently intent on tying her up.

Sister looked up at us leaning out the window. She mouthed silently, "Canton—execution—pray!"

Sister Adelaide could stand it no longer. She whirled from the window, dashed over to the door, and brushed past the guard who stood there. In a moment she was down the stairs and running across the yard to Sister Vera.

Dismayed at her furious onslaught, the soldiers stood back and Sister took the poor prisoner into her arms.

"God bless you!" she whispered and gave her a strong hug.

"Pray that I will be strong!" Sister Vera answered.

It was over. The commander himself pushed her away, brandishing his revolver. He was terribly angry. Then the guards quickly hustled Sister Adelaide, still protesting, upstairs. She was breathless from the tussle, but she pressed close to the window with us.

The rope, however, was not long enough to tie Sister. Thus she was free to carry her bundle of extra clothes wrapped up in a sheet.

The rabble had been collecting outside along the road for some time. We heard the roar as the preliminary guards passed out the mission gate and the crowd knew that Sister was to come. Then as she appeared at the entrance, the cry came, first from the cheer leader, then from the hoarse throats of a mob goaded to fury.

"Down with the false Sister!"

"Down with the foreign devil spy!"

We turned from the window. I don't think I have ever been so heartsick.

Mrs. Plum told us the rest of the story.

Sister and the guards went a short distance down the road to the place where the bus stops. As they stood there, waiting for the Kim Chang bus, the crowd surged around, staring and making comments.

The Peiping man could not miss the chance for a speech.

"This foreign devil is a spy," he told them. "She came to China to enslave you. This criminal keeps her government informed on all you do and say so that the American imperialists can keep China forever in chains." And on and on, referring constantly to "this criminal."

As he paused for breath once, a child's voice came from the crowd as clear as crystal, "But Mama, she doesn't look a bit like a criminal!"

The bus came just then and Father Langemann was taken off. He was roped unmercifully. The rope had been wet and was contracting as it dried so that the bonds grew tighter and tighter. His bundle of clothes was fastened to his back in such a way that, at every step, the rope pushed in at his throat.

The Wee Chao soldiers were so proud of having such dangerous criminals in their custody that they wanted a picture taken. The Peiping man was annoyed at this; "Stupid country louts!" he called them. But when he saw that the photographer was already there, he gave in.

The soldiers sat the criminals in the center. A row of machine guns on the ground pointed up at them. The tallest soldiers stood behind with their guns pointing down on them. The rest ranged themselves at the sides with bayonets pointing in on them. The entire military strength of Wee Chao, in arms as well as men, had to get into that picture.

Now that the platoon had settled themselves, it was the photographer's turn to worry. He shifted position several times, focused the camera this way and that, emerged from the black hood of his ancient viewer, and announced his difficulty.

"I can't get that row of bayonets in."

Then somebody noticed that there was a space on the bench between Sister and Father.

"Move over," they told her.

"No," she said quickly. "I can't. It's wet." Fortunately, the guards thought her too big a criminal to be gainsaid. They rearranged the whole picture, instead, flattered that anyone so wicked had come into their net.

The Peiping man stood coldly aloof. As soon as the shutter clicked, he stepped forward: "All right, now. Let's get going with this demonstration!"

The procession formed. Father was placed between two rows of soldiers; Sister followed him at a distance of about ten feet. They started down Wee Chao's main street, between two walls of screaming furies.

The middle school students (equivalent to our high school) had been worked up to a frenzy. They threw sticks and stones. They pelted them with mud and manure and all sorts of filth. Someone ripped off Sister's veil. She snatched to get it back but only succeeded in tearing off part of it. This ragged piece she tied around her head.

Slowly and deliberately Father Langemann walked ahead as if he would not shorten the ordeal by a single moment. Then, a student put a stick between his legs and he fell, unable to balance himself because his arms were tied and the heavy bundle on his back swung him around.

The horde pounced on him and beat him unmercifully. The crowd went wild. They got out of all control. Several guards, trying to pick up Father Langemann and get him going again, found themselves belabored by the students too. They fled. Priest and Sister were left to the frenzied mob.

Father Langemann got to his feet again and proceeded calmly to the police office, followed still by Sister. He was bloody, bruised, almost strangled. But he walked as composedly as if he were making a meditation in a quiet cloister.

They spent the night on the floor of the police station. They had had nothing to eat all that day. Even the wily Mrs. Plum could not get anything to them, either openly or by smuggling.

It was raining heavily next morning. The mob was exhausted from yesterday's saturnalia. Quietly, the Criminal Langemann, Sister Vera, and their guards boarded a bus to ride to the next demonstration in a town seventeen miles away. They had had no breakfast, either.

Mrs. Plum saw them go. Then she hunched her raincoat of rice straw high around her ears, pulled down her big rain-or-sun hat, and ran barefoot through the puddles down the road to tell us all about it.

"Canton—execution—pray that I may be strong." Sister's last message rang in our hearts. We began almost constant adoration before the Blessed Sacrament hidden in the hollow base of Our Lady's statue. The small white jar (ex-ointment, I believe) fitted snugly into it. The Blessed Sacrament Itself was encased between two pieces of celluloid covered with white silk. The whole was no more than two inches square.

By now, we were no longer a novelty to the Youth Corps and the soldiers. After three months, public interest had shifted. Ng Fout Fa was in disgrace and things were looking bad for Mr. Lo, as well. We felt emboldened to do a bit of obvious praying.

Another expedition into the now sadly depleted sealed-up room resulted in finding a jigsaw. We took one board from each of the two beds we used alternately with the floor. This was just enough lumber to make a priedieu. Sister Alice Ann scoured the walls for nails that had formerly held pictures. The ever-present meat cleaver served as plane and hammer.

Sister Adelaide went to work. She stained the creation with a wash of potassium permanganate and waxed it with vaseline. Sister Alice Ann dug out a cross in the center and we found some gold paint in the storeroom.

All in all, it was a fine job, we thought. We placed it before the

statue and, from that day on, someone was constantly on her knees beseeching strength for Sister Vera and all others in prisons for their Faith.

The thought was tremendous comfort to me just a few weeks later, when I found myself in like circumstances.

FOURTEEN

Jail

I was cooking our dinner when it happened. The procedure is simple. You have before you a concrete trough, something like a sink filled with sand and earth. You put in it the stove which is made of clay and shaped like a horseshoe but with a rounded bottom. Through the open end of the horseshoe you put your sticks in such a way that you can keep pushing them into the fire as they burn down. Then on top of the stove you put your clay pot (if you are fortunate enough to have a pot; otherwise a No. 10 tin can) and fan vigorously but scientifically so that a minimum of smoke gets into your eyes.

You peek into the pot now and then to see how the rice is coming along. To begin with, you must have sufficient water to cover the rice and to be two inches or so above it. You plunge your hand in to measure the distance. If the water over the rice covers up to the second knuckle of your middle finger, then you have it right.

But I was engaged in fancy business as well. It was Sister Alice Ann's birthday; she had just turned twenty-six. I was determined to produce a cake. So I was struggling with the oven she had concocted out of the kerosene tin. I had whipped up a queer conglomeration of flour, brown sugar, buffalo milk, and peanut oil which I hoped would turn out to be a cake. Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained, I thought.

We were feeling fairly secure in those days. It was about a month after Sister Vera was taken and nothing much had happened since then. Our arch enemy, Mr. Lo, had finally been muttered into jail by indignant villagers for excessive practices of graft among them and we thought we were pretty well forgotten. We even took little evening walks in the convent yard instead of staying cooped up in the three rooms upstairs. There were soldiers around all the time, of course, and the school children used to stand about and gawk. But, for the most part, nobody did anything more than point us out as reactionaries, American dogs, spies, enemies of the people, and wolves in sheep's clothing. We were so used to such bouquets that we hardly paid attention to them.

Then, that morning in June, twenty soldiers tramped down our street. They stopped dead at our front door.

There was nothing very alarming about that. I didn't stop fiddling with the stove to go to the window and look out. We were so tired of soldiers! They raised their pigs next to our yards; and their open toilets were dug close to the wall. Coming in at night, they often could not quite make their own quarters and dropped asleep before they got home. More than once we had to step over their sleeping forms as we went on early morning water-carrying detail.

So I was not unduly alarmed even when the heavy boots came in the house and proceeded up the stairs to our apartment. "The others can talk to them," I thought. "I'm busy." And I went over to a bucket of water in the corner to scoop up a cupful.

But in two seconds I realized my error. The man who strode into our rooms was another investigator from Peiping.

"Everybody out!" he said and waved us downstairs. Mrs. Plum tried to stand her ground.

"You too," he said and pushed her along with us.

"What are you going to do?" Sister Adelaide asked.

"Official Government search," he replied.

"What, again?" Sister Alice Ann said, grumpily.

As we sat in the room downstairs, we could hear their heavy tread passing and repassing over our heads. One guard watched over us.

"I'm worried about that cake," I said. "I do wish they would hurry."

"They can't take long," Sister Alice Ann comforted me. "There isn't much of anything left to search through."

Mrs. Plum sat apart from us with her eyes on the ceiling, listening.

Another soldier came downstairs and nodded to our guard.

"Everybody upstairs!"

I ran up joyfully and went straight to the kitchen alcove. The Peiping man was there. He was looking over my cooking utensils, probing into boxes and little cans, looking over the sandy mud in the concrete trough to see if there were anything recently buried in it.

He confronted me as I came in. The other soldiers closed in behind me.

"Move that bucket," he ordered, pointing to the wooden bucket in the corner.

I went over and lifted the heavy bucket.

"What's that!" he yelled in mock surprise.

I picked up a small package, maybe three inches square and about an inch thick, wrapped in paper and tied with a coarse string. It fitted beautifully under the flange around the bottom of the bucket.

I turned the package curiously in my hands. I had never seen it before.

"I haven't any idea what it is," I said slowly.

"It's opium, foreign woman," he said. "It's contraband opium. You are an opium smuggler!"

By this time, everybody—soldiers, Sisters, and Mrs. Plum—had crowded into the kitchen.

"You put it there!" Mrs. Plum stormed. "I heard you move those buckets when we were all downstairs!" One of the soldiers burst out laughing like a boy whose trick had failed.

"Better be quiet," I warned her. "You may get yourself into trouble over this." I was too late.

The investigator said, "Take that running dog, too." And two soldiers stepped forward to grab her arms.

So we went downstairs again. The other soldiers had found the radio in the sealed-up storeroom. It was covered with dust and obviously had not been used for months. The registration had run out on it, of course. We had not renewed it since we weren't supposed to have anything to do with supplies sealed up by the Government.

It always amuses me to think that they passed by the traces of our expeditions in that storeroom. They knew before they came that they were to get that radio and plant the opium. It was a cut-and-dried search.

Downstairs, the "evidence" of my crimes was assembled on a table: No. 1, the package of opium; No. 2, the dusty radio. The Peiping investigator made a little oration on what good citizens do not do, and what Mao has a right to expect of every loyal Chinese. He also put in a few words of commendation for himself and the soldiers, "always alert and vigilant for truth and justice."

Sister Alice Ann and Sister Adelaide were sent upstairs. Then we went outside and formed a procession for the march to jail.

First came the evidence borne in ceremonial style so that the passers-by would see that I had been caught redhanded. Then Mrs. Plum was placed between guards. I was lined up behind her with my guards. Lastly, in grand style, the Peiping investigator would follow us.

I stood there, waiting for the rest to get into line; my heart was in turmoil but my mind was strangely cool. I was concerned about those two up in our rooms. How dreadful they must feel to see me go! One of them had in her pocket the Blessed Sacra-

ment; I thanked God it was not I this time. Surely, in jail, I would be searched minutely.

I was leaving with them one more dreadful anxiety, another ache in their hearts such as Sister Vera had left with us. I tried to be cheerful and wave. It was all a brave front. Inside I was sick with fear of what might lie ahead. I am not the heroic type.

A "harrumph," a barked command, and we set off down through our little main street. There was no demonstration. Everybody had more important things to do at that time of the year.

Not far from the mission, the Peiping man stopped the parade. He advanced menacingly toward Mrs. Plum. The poor old soul was terrorized. She shrank into her clothes, speechless. It was exactly what he wanted.

"Ha, you old witch," he said, "did you say that you saw my men put that package of opium under the bucket?"

"Oh, no sir!" She had only heard it.

It was the answer he wanted. He did not intend to complicate the case with this old hag.

"Go and mend your ways, old woman," he told her and released her.

Mrs. Plum looked at me. Would she be more use if she stuck it out with me or ran back to the others? I nodded to her with a smile and she scampered away as fast as her sixty-year-old legs would carry her. We proceeded to the police station.

They must have been waiting for us. No sooner was I inside the door than three men rushed at me. They tore off my veil and habit and took everything apart. Rosary, collar, and cuffs came off and were investigated minutely. I can still see one man carefully feeling every seam in the tunic, and there were plenty of seams for it was well patched. Another devoted his attention to the veil. He took out the pins which held it to the frame, felt all over the hem for concealed papers, and held it up in sections against the light. Then he made a great discovery.

We Maryknoll Sisters put a bit of cardboard in the front of

our veils, to keep them stiff over the forehead. Since it is covered by the veiling, we generally use any convenient piece of cardboard we can find. In that particular veil, I had used the menu of a President Line boat. It was good-quality, stiff paper, which I had cut to fit the frame. Printed on the outside had been a highly colored picture of a Javanese dancer. On the inside the dinner choices had been listed, irregularly spaced, something like this:

filet of sole
roast beef au jus
creamed carrots
celery olives
potatoes au gratin
rolls and butter

ice cream
blanc mange
pineapple upside-down cake

coffee, tea, milk

In some places there were only half-words left where I had cut them off in shaping the cardboard to the frame.

"Ha, what is this?" my searcher exulted and he brought it over to the local chief who knew some English.

He knew English—but he did not know French—and he had never seen a western-type menu.

"What does that mean?" he questioned me. "It does not make sense."

"Those are the names of foods," I tried to explain.

"Potatoes, carrots, pineapple cake, yes," he conceded. "But what is *jus,* what is *mange,* what is *au?* Those are not food names in English."

"No, they are French," I said.

"French and English together in one sentence? Why? And

there is no right construction to that sentence. Where is the verb?"

I tried my best to explain, but we only got more complicated. He was convinced that the French words were code messages and that even the English meant something else, probably names of spies in our underground. The queer spacing on the page only made it worse. That, no doubt, was to indicate the location of my fellow spies. In the end I just kept silent.

Delighted with his find, the local chief of police took it to our Peiping man. This sophisticate recognized it at once.

"Stupid!" he said and tore it to bits.

All this time, I stood before them attired in my underslip. Then, having found nothing in my habit and veil, they ordered a woman to take me into the next room for a personal search. Suffice it to say that she was extremely thorough.

The search over, all my belongings were given back to me, except the rosary and the medal we wear around our necks on a silver chain. I was puzzled as to the reason, but later it became clear that they were afraid I would hang myself with them. Anything long and thin which can possibly be twisted into a rope is confiscated as soon as a prisoner is registered in the jail.

The search had taken many hours. It was nearly seven in the evening now. The woman searcher brought a bowl of rice and "soong" and a pair of chopsticks. I was glad to get it.

"*An yu sim*," I said to her. It means "You have a heart," and is the common way to say "thank you" in our section of China.

For the first time, she really looked at me. In all our hours together, during which she had examined every square inch of me, she had been surly and mean, throwing my underclothes on the dirty floor and handling me roughly.

Now she looked at me curiously and our eyes met.

"*An yu sim*," I said again.

For all of forty-five seconds or so, I thought she was going to turn human. The hard lines of her mouth relaxed; she looked me

straight in the face. Then the sneer returned and her eyes were again veiled in hate. The gospel of hate had won that first round.

It was dark now. The woman waited until I had finished my supper. The soldiers and police had gone home long ago.

"Come along now," she barked as the last grain of rice was gathered in by my chopsticks. I rose and followed her through the rear door and down a dark corridor all of stone.

We turned many corners; walked up many stairs; passed through many corridors, some wide, some narrow. At last, I was pushed into a small room, perhaps 15 by 15 feet. In the faint light of my guide's flashlight, I saw that twenty-five women were there, in two layers of sleepers. Half of them lay side by side on the floor; the other half slept on a sort of shelf about four feet from the floor.

"Shove over," the woman commanded the group on the floor.

"There!" and she pointed out a 2-foot-wide space in the row for me. I was only too glad to lie down between the dark silent forms.

Everything was quiet, except for an occasional stir as someone changed position. Events of the day poured through my mind. I had been lucky about the menu. What if that Peiping man had been as ignorant as the chief? Have I anything else, I wondered, that might get me into trouble? Had I said anything to get anybody else into trouble? What were the Sisters doing tonight? I prayed that God would let them know that I wasn't so badly off.

Just then, the woman beside me shifted position and turned toward me. I thought she had gone back to sleep, when she whispered softly,

"Have you got a knife?"

"No," I whispered back. "What do you want a knife for?"

"To cut my throat," she answered quite simply.

We talked a bit. Her husband and father were both in this prison. She had two small children at home. They were starving, she thought, for one was a baby at breast. She had no hope of ever getting out.

It was all in whispers but soon another whisper cut across the dark air.

"Keep quiet! Do you want the guards coming in here?"

That night, and the ones that followed, were a real hell. We were near the torture rooms. All night long, screams, curses, and yells resounded through the stone corridors. The pitch black made it much, much worse. I could see then, why Satan is called the Prince of Darkness, and Our Lord is Lord of Light. If only the faintest ray of light would come! And dawn—dawn would be heaven itself!

My imagination started working overtime. What would happen to me? What would they do to me? Would I have the strength to withstand torture? Would I reveal the names of Catholics and get them into trouble to save my own skin? If I were hung up by the thumbs, if I were burned with cigarettes all over my body, if I were beaten with chains or rubber hose. . . .

It was then that the Holy Ghost inspired a resolution that stood me in good stead. I took my imagination and repressed it "for the duration."

"No," I said to myself, half aloud. "I'm not going to suffer more than I have to. When torture comes, that will be time enough to think about it."

The sensible thing to do was to get as much sleep as possible. I turned myself on my side and resolutely closed my eyes, relaxing with an effort.

I remember a retreat master once saying that he never knew such good sleepers as nuns. "They can sleep standing up," he said. "They often catch forty winks walking to class. They are wide awake one minute and deep in dreams three seconds later. They never waste time in getting to sleep."

I thought of that priest as I drifted off despite the screams and yells and bloodcurdling sounds which filled that house of sorrow.

It may have been late that night or in the early hours of the

morning, when a guard put his head into the women's cell and called, "The Criminal Kou Niong [Unmarried Woman]."

He meant me. I was dreadfully frightened. But I rose, walked over to the door, and followed him outside to the dark corridor. What could not happen to a helpless white woman? Once more, I felt hysteria mounting. I stepped hard on the brakes. My mind cooled and my heart calmed, as though some great hand had reached out and steadied me.

"Thank you, God," I said to Him and followed the guard's flashlight as it illumined the stone floor ahead.

FIFTEEN

"The Head of All Devils"

The guard gave me a push and we started down the dark passageway. We passed many cell doors; most were quiet, but from two or three came the sounds of maniacs, singing, drooling, yelling, laughing. The yells of the tortured, the screams, the blubbering got louder and I knew we must be advancing toward the torture rooms.

Off to the right I could make out a break in the wall where a stairway must be. My guard stopped. In the lighted area at the head of the stairs, I saw another officer. He beckoned me to come up.

Gathering all my courage together, I slowly mounted the stairs toward him.

He waited until I was just a step below him. Then with one quick motion he snatched at my belt and tore it from me. I shrank against the wall. He laughed.

"Go in there," he indicated a door. "You're wanted for questioning."

The belt snatching was merely to unnerve me.

I entered the questioning room for the first time. In this old prison, it was just a small chamber ringed with file cases. A single unshaded electric bulb hung from the ceiling, shedding a glare over the desk, the chair for the prisoner, and the dusty cement floor littered with a heterogeneous collection of things made of

leather and rope and bits of iron. I had no idea what these were.

At the desk sat the chief investigator, a middle-aged stocky man, keen of eye and hard of mouth. Cigarette butts polka-dotted the floor around his swivel chair, some still burning. The inevitable teapot and bowl stood at his elbow; he had a habit of whiffling his tea through his widely spaced front teeth.

With him was a secretary, a thin, nervous little fellow who apologetically sat at one end of the big desk. There was no place for his knees, but hour after hour he sat there writing Chinese characters like lightning with his knees swung around first one way and then another. He was truly a martyr for the cause. I don't think he missed a word of all the thousands—no, millions —that we said in those night sessions.

As I stood waiting for the chief inspector to look up from his desk, I counseled myself: "Take it easy. They'll do their best to get you excited. They hope that you'll try to explain your way out or to reason with them, that you'll get yourself more and more involved, and give out more and more information to explain what you said before.

"Let your answers be Yes and No, and those only when you fully understand the question. Take it easy. Don't let them wear you out."

We started off with information I knew they already had. Age? Years in China? Positions held? Residences and years in them? I answered briefly. Then we started on my life before I became a Maryknoll Sister.

"What was your work before you entered Maryknoll?"

"Work? I was a daughter in our house."

There was no point in telling him that I had been a secretary employed by a large radio-manufacturing company. He would have used that to prove that I could construct a radio receiving and sending set out of bicycle parts.

I also shied away from any connection with drugs, lest the opium charge gain weight. I purposely dulled my mind so that I really remembered nothing of importance.

After an hour or so my answer technique became obvious, so the party began to get rough. The first step was to tie me.

Two men who had been hanging around in and out of the room advanced toward me with a rope. I did no struggling and permitted myself no tenseness, as it circled my neck and fastened my elbows tight against my waist. Then, they tied me to the chair itself with my neck pulled backward.

"We are being very considerate of you," the investigator said. "But if you do not answer questions adequately, we will be forced to resort to other means."

Then it dawned on me what the odd contraptions of leather and iron and wires were, lying here and there on the floor, on top of the files, on the desk. They were torture pieces.

One of the men picked up a piece. He measured it around my thumb and made adjustments. He estimated my height and ran an appraising eye over me to guess at my weight. Plainly, he was getting ready to hang me up by my thumbs.

I felt hysteria and fear rising like a black fog in my mind. What would they do? How could I suffer it? Would I give way? Then I remembered my resolution: "I'm not going to suffer anything I don't have to. If I'm going to hang by the thumbs, I'll start suffering when I hang, and not a minute before."

That I am sane today, I think, is due to this frame of mind. Time and time again, torture came very, very close. I was tied up many times. I was gagged until I thought my lower jaw would drop off. I was hit by revolver butts. But the things I feared most never occurred. I remember one night:

"No, I did not say that," I said.

"It is here on the record."

"The record is wrong."

"We'll see about that!" He was really mad.

They took me into the torture room next door, a real chamber of horrors filled with all sorts of contraptions whose uses I could only guess at. They sat me down facing a sort of electrical control board. A man brought in a long length of electric wires,

looked at me meaningfully, and laughed. Another brought something like a leg brace, all of metal and leather, and put it around my leg and foot. There were several others who pulled switches and tested all kinds of heating surfaces which, I suppose, were to burn or brand me.

"Take it easy; take it easy," I told myself over and over again. "It hasn't happened yet."

Then they left me all alone in the dark. All alone and tied up to this electrical monster. One minute passed, two minutes, five minutes. Each one seemed a year. Still, nothing happened.

I don't know whether it was planned so, or whether the machine didn't work. At any rate, after ten minutes or so, the men came back in, untied me, and without a word sent me back to my cell.

In thinking back on these investigations, I am convinced that there were drugs in the room. For one thing, it always took a whole day to recover from the exhaustion that overwhelmed me as the questioning went on. For another, while we prisoners stayed in the room for three or four hours, the guards and investigators took turns, never staying for more than an hour.

We covered many topics other than the radio and the opium: the organization of the Church, the Catholic missions in China, the origin and administration of Maryknoll, which they called "the biggest spy ring in Asia."

Often, it seemed to me that I opened my mouth and somebody else did the talking. One night, the investigator asked, "If America and China go to war, who would you want to see win the war?"

"I don't clearly understand what you mean," I said, stalling for time.

As he repeated the question, my mind turned over the consequences to myself and to others if I told the truth. I started to talk but I felt as if I were listening to somebody else's voice.

"America does not want to fight with China, nor with any other nation. Only a few years ago, American boys fought for

China right here in your own country. America gave her youth and money and many young lives to save China from Japan."

This was not exactly what he wanted so he changed the subject.

"What do you think of the new regime?" he asked.

For a moment, I was puzzled. Then I said, "I notice that the streets are cleaner than they used to be."

This must have pleased him for he let me return to my cell immediately.

A few days after I arrived there, I was called out of the cell for picture taking. As I entered the room, Bishop Milligan and Father Zeller were just going out. They had been picked up in the diocesan city some distance away. Dr. Ley of the Protestant hospital in Wee Chao was with them. He was a fine man, very kind to everybody.

The Bishop smiled as he passed me and waved his hand in a wide gesture. I knew what it was—General Absolution given in grave danger.

In the room I was ordered to sit behind a table on which reposed the package of opium and the radio. The latter was covered with mold and dust which should have been proof enough that it was not in active use. A large number plate, No. 197051, was adjusted on my chest. The photographer snapped on the lights and disappeared a moment behind his black cloth. Then he stood aside and clicked. Prisoner No. 197051, the Criminal Calcotino, a foreign devil, was ready to hang in the rogues' gallery.

Six nights after we had been imprisoned, Dr. Ley became mentally ill. His solitary cell was directly across the hall from the women's cell where I was. He himself knew what was happening.

"God!" he cried out in English. "God, get me out of here! They're driving me crazy!"

At first, it was only spasmodic raving; then the cries became continuous. He sang; he shouted; he laughed uncontrollably

and blubbered down to sobbing. Many a night, as I lay on the floor between two silent, suffering women, the doctor's raving hammered at the strong wall I had built around my sanity. It did not bother the other women so much, for they could not understand his English. But to me, his cries to his wife and pitiful pleas to God were poignant. While it lasted, this was the worst suffering I endured—the thought of this good man going to pieces.

The guards were annoyed at his noise. They took long bamboo poles and poked at him through the bars. But he only shouted the louder.

"Let me go and talk to him," I asked.

With some reluctance and only because they wanted to quiet him, the commander of the guards permitted it. They opened the heavy iron door and I stepped into his tiny cell, while the guard kept watch through the iron bars at the top of the door.

Dr. Ley had been on his knees at the side of the bedboard with his arms lifted up to heaven, swaying back and forth and shouting his prayers. But when he heard the door swing open, he turned ready to fight. He could not make out who or what I was.

"I'm a Maryknoll Sister," I told him in English. "The Sisters in Wee Chao have often visited your hospital, Doctor. I'm in this prison, too, just as you are. I live just across the hall."

He stood up against the wall breathing heavily and not saying a word. Plainly, he did not recognize me. That was not remarkable, for I wore but the remnants of a religious habit and the light was very dim in that stone cell.

I started toward him. Immediately he lifted his arm to strike me. But as I continued talking in a quiet low tone, he lowered his arm and permitted me to sit him down on the bedboard. There we talked quietly of the things he loved—America, his twenty years in China, and the service of God in our fellowmen.

Several times after that, before we were moved to the temporary prison across the river, I was able to quiet him. But after a month he got worse and worse and nobody could calm him.

Six weeks after my arrest, the whole town celebrated Anti-American Week. From the tiny barred window, I could see a poster across the street depicting an American soldier, with wolf-like teeth, coming up with a dripping bayonet from a wholesale carnage of Koreans and Chinese. School children paraded in the streets singing anti-American songs; roving bands of soldiers and Youth Corps boys shouted anti-American slogans throughout the nights.

My thoughts went to the two Sisters I had left behind. What were they going through? Once again, I had to deaden my thoughts, pushing conjecture out of my mind entirely.

In the middle of this bitter, vicious week, all of us prisoners were moved to another prison across the river. The old prison was to be remodeled to hold more prisoners. In the past year, the criminal population of our town had increased at a phenomenal rate.

On that morning, guards came into the cells early and tied us together for the march. I was fastened between two other women, arm to arm. This made it practically impossible for me to carry anything. Yet I had to carry my bedding, for in China a prisoner is expected to provide his clothes, bedding, medicines, and transportation as well as any food over and above the basic rice and vegetables. He takes them with him from cell to cell and from prison to prison. Otherwise, he does without.

Every movement of the women beside me, as we stumbled over the rough street, jerked my arms and loosened my hold on this awkward bundle. It was four miles to the new prison. The soldiers set a pretty fast pace because they were unencumbered with baggage. For the first half mile it was dreadful; one of us three was continually dropping her bundle or having to stop to readjust it.

The usual crowd of pedestrian traffic filled the streets and sidewalks. The people looked at us with only passing interest, for "Hate America" was the theme song that week. Landowners, Nationalists and ex-Communist leaders in bad with the Party,

such as made up most of our procession, were of secondary importance! I slipped along with the rest of the prisoners.

We were a sorry parade. Most of us were local people who had relatives and friends in town. As we passed along the streets, there were many onlookers who waved to some unfortunate in the line, and even some who tried to help.

I had just asked my companions to stop a second while I tried to get a better hold of my bundle when I saw Mrs. Plum. My! It was good to see her. She went up to our guard who had stopped also.

"Let me carry her bundle for her," she asked. "You'll get along quicker."

He didn't even bother to look at her.

Mrs. Plum knew it was a useless request. She just wanted me to see her and thus to know that she would inform the Sisters that I had been moved. My blessings followed her bent old figure as she hobbled fast away.

After a while, we three women tied together decided to keep step and to carry all three bundles rolled together as one. This was somewhat better. We got to the jail without serious mishap. But my arms were stiff as boards for a week afterward.

The guards in the new jail were really mean. We had names for them all. The "Hunter Devil" we called one, because he was always on the lookout to see what he could find to report on us; any little trick we had thought up to make life more bearable he discovered and punished. "Beautiful Boy Devil" was a handsome lad of eighteen or so; fired with enthusiasm for the New China, he had all the raw cruelty of youth. The "Hopeless Devil" got his name because petitions to him were useless. He reminded me of an army officer my brother used to talk about as "Don't-give-'em-nothin' Kelly."

Worst of all was the "Head of All Devils." Ugly, snarling, cruel, he had red-rimmed eyes that never rested. The women shrank back in fear when his voice was heard outside the iron

door. They knew that soon his leering eyes would roll over them through the peephole and that his bad language would pour like a stench through corridor and cell.

He never bothered me. He seemed to regard me as entirely out of his field. In fact God chose this Head of All Devils for a work of mercy to me quite beyond his comprehension. It happened this way:

Mrs. Plum was trying desperately to help me. She applied for a job in the prison so as to smuggle things in to me, but she soon found out that workers never saw the prisoners. Then she braved an interview with prison authorities to get better food for me.

"Let me send in to her the food which she is used to," she asked.

"No!"

"She cannot eat rice all the time."

"She'll eat it here," they told her. "Don't be a running dog for an American."

She shrugged off the insult.

"Very well," she said with affected indifference. "Let her die on your hands and you will see the international complications. I know these foreigners. They cannot live on rice, especially the stuff you people feed them."

She won in the end. With this permission, the Sisters were able to send food to me now and then. Mrs. Plum and a friend of hers whom she pressed into service walked four to five miles each way to bring it. Besides, they took cheerfully the bullying from the soldiers.

The system of getting supplies in was this: Mrs. Plum gave the food to the guard on duty and he brought it to me. I ate it while Mrs. Plum waited outside the prison gates. Then the guard took the empty basket out to her.

One day there was a rather nice young guard on duty and I took up courage to request something of him. It had been on my mind for weeks.

"Will you ask her please," I said, "to bring some of that sweet white bread we used to have each morning?"

I had a horrible session in the questioning room that night. As I sank to the cell floor to rest in the early morning, bruised and exhausted, I prayed almost aloud, "Dear Lord, come to me today. I need Your presence here."

But my heart sank when I saw that the Head of All Devils was on duty that morning. More than once I had seen him bring food to the barred window, only to throw it on the corridor floor outside just as the poor prisoner reached out to get it.

It was an awfully hot summer, that year, and he loved to do this also with any water given to us. Each of us got a cup every day from the prison, but some of the women had servants and loyal friends who tried to bring extra water. With our tongues hanging out with thirst, we had to watch this man pour the water on the ground rather than bring it in to us. Then he railed at the carrier for bringing it.

I was terribly anxious lest the Head of All Devils wreak his evil on the Consecrated Host I had asked for. During the morning, however, his hand came through the barred window, holding a single roll of bread. I leaped from the corner, where I had been mending my clothes, and ran to him.

"Here's your bread. You foreigners! Bread is everything to you," he said, as he watched me devour the roll almost trembling with eagerness. I knew that the Consecrated Host was concealed therein.

"The woman outside says that she is to bring back a message whether you like the sweet white bread," he said as I finished.

"Yes, yes," I answered. "Tell them to send It often. It's the food of the strong."

They sent It seven times after that. Then, one day, the Head of All Devils tore my food to shreds before he gave it to me. Luckily, there was no Host in it. It seems that a prisoner had received poison through just such a package and had committed suicide. Mr. Head Devil took no chances of my robbing the state.

After that, anybody bringing food to prisoners had to taste it in the guards' presence to prove that it wasn't poison.

I never asked for the sweet white bread again.

We had a daily routine. Up at dawn—everybody had to get up. If you tried to get some extra rest to make up for time spent in the examining room during the night, the guards poked at you with their bamboo poles.

"Stand up and sing!"

"I can't sing," I said.

"That doesn't matter," the guards said. "Just shout." That was what everybody else did, to tell the truth. The songs were all antiforeign. I grew good and tired of them, for this period lasted for a solid hour. Then there was a study period: new songs to be learned and lectures on dialectic materialism.

The first meal of the day came at about eleven and consisted of a bowl of thin rice gruel with a few vegetables immersed in it. Then, more lectures which sometimes lasted five hours. Different men told us how wonderful the new regime was, how they would one day conquer and rule the world. Half the time was spent on antiforeign talk; the other half on the marvels of communism.

The other meal came around four in the afternoon. This was a bowl of rice with vegetables on top. Sometimes, on very rare occasions, a bit of meat came with it.

At six o'clock we had a roll call and the cell was sealed for the night. The keys were sent to the mandarin. This makeshift jail, a temporary affair, was a frame building; even the bars were of bamboo, not iron. I often thought that if a fire ever broke out the jail would burn down in no time. Luckily, nobody had any matches. Some of the prisoners were desperate enough to burn themselves and everybody else to death.

Every evening we endured a Communist rally. Everybody had to examine his conscience in public and tell what he had done against the Government that day. This confession included

thoughts; it was part of a thought-control technique. "I found myself unable to be interested in the lectures today" was a fairly common self-accusation. After that, we were to tell how we thought the new regime could be improved. The sessions lasted until after ten, sometimes after eleven. They ended with singing.

I was only too glad to take my place on the floor and go to sleep. My clothes and flesh were crawling with vermin. In the beginning, I used to stay awake at night scratching and hunting through my clothes for the pests, but before long I hardly noticed the bites and itching. Like everybody else, I slept the night through, unless called for questioning.

One day, a guard noticed me sitting very quietly during the study period. "You're not looking at your book," he said severely. "You're praying. You are not allowed to pray."

"You can kill me," I said, "but you cannot stop me from praying."

"I'm not wasting words," he said. "I'm commanding you not to pray. If you pray, I'll put you in chains."

Often, after that, he used to ask, "Are you praying?"

"No," I would say, "I'm studying," though I was studying something far deeper than the book in my hands. I had no desire to wear a 13-pound chain around my ankles.

About every third day an inspector searched through the few belongings each of us had. Anything sharp, even a common pin, was confiscated. This was the rule in every jail I was in. Anything long and thin which could be twisted into a rope was also taken. For this reason, I lost the scapular of my habit. (This is a straight piece of material which hangs down the front and back of our habit; it is the distinctive mark of the Dominican Order.)

Even so, with all the precautions, several prisoners succeeded in committing suicide. In our six weeks in this temporary prison, four ended their lives.

One of these was reported to be Dr. Ley. I no longer saw him, for he had been put in a part of the prison far from the women's section; but, through the bamboo "wireless," I knew he was still

insane. Then, one morning, he was strangely silent. He was hanging from a rope made of twisted strips of sheet. The Bishop and Father Zeller were brought into his cell to take him down. They found him ghastly white, not purple as strangled people are.

The Communists tried to make these two sign a statement that Dr. Ley was a suicide. They refused. Later, however, they did sign a statement that he appeared to be insane. Very possibly, the corpse was strung up to simulate suicide.

By mid-August, renovations on the Wee Chao prison had been completed. We were moved back.

The four-mile hike was agony for all of us. Many prisoners dragged chains around their ankles that gave them just room enough for a short step. As each foot went forward, the circle of iron turned around the ankle, rubbing the bone raw. Festered and oozing pus, these poor chained legs left footprints of suffering on the stones of our city streets.

We were all tied in small groups. We dragged, stumbled, limped, and fell. When one dropped, he pulled his rope-mates down with him.

I had been very ill with dystentery. It had drained almost every bit of strength from my body. But I was tied with a much sicker woman. She could hardly stand, much less walk. Every time she fell, the rope tightened around my neck. To make it worse, she had a heavy pack to carry, for her belongings included a thick padded quilt.

Somehow—I'll never know how—I managed to hoist her pack over my shoulder and to carry my own bundle over my arm. I put my free hand around the woman's waist and half carried her along. Thus we hobbled along the four miles.

I thought I would never live to get there.

SIXTEEN

Prison, Russian Style

It was a real Russian-style prison we went back to.

The cells were small and low. The ceilings of red tiles increased the heat. In August, the sun made a perfect oven out of our cell. The window was boarded up except for a 4-inch shaft. No air and practically no light came in. Six women lying arm to arm carpeted the floor, leaving only a foot-wide aisle at our feet.

A simple hole in the wall served as toilet. The sleeping shelf was a solid brick platform which was, really, the whole cell. It stretched from wall to wall. The only walking space was the aisle, which was like a trough at the bottom of the sleeping shelf. All in all, I don't think the cell was any bigger than 12 by 7 feet.

Crowding made sleep almost impossible. All during the night someone's arms or legs were on top of me. Someone's breath was in my face. The screams and wailings of the tortured reverberated through the stone corridors and tile ceilings. The smell was terrific.

All night long guards passed to and fro, flashing an electric light on each face in turn, for a long period. Prisoners in chains passed the door, dragging their fettered feet and crying pitifully; they knew they were bound for the torture chamber.

None of us slept much. Each woman in that cell cringed in fear lest she be called next. If one did go, it was a question whether she would come back; or, if she did, in what condition.

Often and often, I put my arms around some poor wreck as she was thrust back into the cell, hysterical, sobbing, black and blue, and often striped with welts from the lash. For hours I comforted them in Christ's name.

One of these was Gnit Chong, formerly a well-to-do shopkeeper. Someone had reported that she had Hong Kong and American money that she had not converted into Communist currency. She entered our cell with a good deal of self-assurance. She would soon clear herself and get out, she was sure.

But her confidence waned as, night after night, she was taken for questioning and torture. Still she stuck to her story that she had no non-Communist money. Then, several prisoners were executed in a cell down in the basement. Gnit Chong was taken out early that night and did not return until morning. She had spent the night locked up in that tiny cell with the corpses and had been made to sleep on the floor with them.

The next night, she went again and also the third night. By this time, she smelled of the rotting bodies when she came back to us. As far as I was concerned, it was just one more bad smell, but the Chinese have a horror of death. Gnit Chong was almost stark crazy with fear of another night down there. She sobbed all day and brooded in her corner. When guards came for her in the evening, they had to carry her out screaming with terror. We were not surprised to learn that she had confessed to having the money. Whether she really did or not, I don't know. We heard no more of her.

Executions went on regularly. One was of an old man, eighty-four years of age, who had been in the prison for five months. He was so feeble that they had to carry him. As he could not stand, he had to sit while they shot him. The guards came back from their task, laughing about it, because he had to be shot sitting down.

The old man's granddaughter was in our cell. She cried on my shoulder. But no tears were permitted. The guards threatened her with the chains if she shed another tear.

Prison news seeped in through various channels. I suppose this was because when one is so tense all the time, the senses become very alert. At any rate, we knew who was to be executed each day, who would be released, and who was due for solitary confinement. This last was worse than execution.

The prisoner was put in a small room, absolutely black, just big enough to lie down or sit up. A small hole, about 4 inches square, near the floor, let in the only air. The victim lay on his stomach near this hole, gasping for breath. Then he would scream and writhe in the pitch blackness; and gasp silently again. Three days and three nights of this, and the victim was ready to sign any confession.

There were other tidy little tricks to wheedle confessions out of prisoners. Here are a few:

Tying wasps in their sleeves and clothing.

Forcing them to kneel on broken stones and thorns.

Hanging by the thumbs or toes.

Burning the beards of old men, or the hair of women.

Imbedding thorns in the arms and neck and placing bricks on top to press them in farther.

Burning deep into the flesh with cigarettes.

And assorted beatings, kickings, stonings, and the water treatment.

In this last, the water was mixed with kerosene and forced down the victim's throat. When his stomach bulged with liquid, the guards jumped and sat on it, forcing him to disgorge.

Each and all of these things were done to women from my cell. I saw the terrible wounds and scars when they returned. Ironically, a nurse was sent around to the cells each morning to treat the tortured prisoners.

I was having troubles of my own by now, for I fell ill with dysentery again. For several days, I lay on that brick bed, in utter filth and desolation. I know of no greater torture than to be offensive to one's self and others and to be unable to do the least thing about it. The prison doctor came to see me but did

nothing at all. Only when he saw that there was real danger did he send me to a hospital.

Mrs. Plum found out, of course, and hurried to the hospital to see if she could do anything for me. She approached the guard at the door and said in a very loud voice,

"Is the American woman here?"

"Yes, she is!" I shouted.

The nurse was quick to sense what was going on. She ran to the door and opened it wide.

"Mrs. Plum!" I called, "tell the Sisters to send me some food. They haven't given me anything to eat here."

"They send it every day," she said. But all of a sudden, the guard came to and slammed the door. I don't know whether he had been really dozing or whether he had mercifully slipped a point of discipline. If so, he never did it again.

I was really starving. I had not had a bite to eat for several days then. The guards would permit nothing to reach me. The nurse (God bless her!) tried to sneak an eggnog past them, but they caught her and she had to hand it over to them.

The doctors in this hospital were fine men. They pitied me. Several times they ordered glucose injections in an effort to get some nourishment into me, but I could not live on injections. On the fourth day in the hospital, I asked to go back to prison. There, at least, I would get two meals a day.

I was dreadfully weak, of course. Even so, I had to carry my bundle of clothes all the way. I was exhausted, for it was a walk of several miles. A guard walked alongside; he would not lift a finger to help me.

Near the end of that trail, just when I could not go another step, a woman came running out of a house by the road. She would not be refused; she insisted on carrying my baggage. The guard, chagrined, gave in and let her do it.

She was a woman I had never seen before and have never seen since. But I love her dearly.

In October, I lost my religious habit.

It was during a questioning. The guard had taken me through the darkness for a long walk. We went through unfamiliar corridors, up strange stairways, across dark courtyards, until I did not know where I was going. Many times he came uncomfortably close and I besought Our Lady to protect me. She always did. Just before I went into the examining room, a hand reached out of the darkness, and snatched my belt off as some hand had done on the first night. But I held a tight rein on my imagination and maintained a stolid front.

As I entered the bright room, the chief inspector was telephoning. "All right," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "we'll take care of them tomorrow. Better put them in a cell for tonight and send a guard out to the convent to watch it." He hung up.

"You might as well write out your confession," he said to me. "We just took your two Sisters into prison. They have confessed to helping you smuggle opium. You might as well give in, too, and take a lighter punishment."

For a second, I was stunned. Then, I knew it for a hoax.

"Whether they have confessed to it, I do not know. But I do know that I have not smuggled opium."

We were off again. The same questions twisted from the last session; the same tying; the same gagging. The inspector became furious. He brought paper and pencil.

"Write! Write!" he yelled, flourishing his revolver.

It was around 2 A.M. and I had been there since 10 P.M. My mind was oppressed by the drug-filled atmosphere; the gag was all but pulling my jaw off. But I could not permit myself to give the signal telling them I was willing to confess.

The chief inspector had an idea. "You are a wolf in sheep's clothing," he said. "You are unworthy to wear the garb of a religious."

With this, he took off my veil. My hair was shaggy, dirty, unkempt, and, I am sure, thickly populated. He threw the veil on the floor, in contempt for what it stands for—virginity in the service of Christ.

Other soldiers removed my cape and long tunic. I returned to the cell wearing my underslip. I put a pajama top over this to keep me a bit warm in that stone cell, in October.

My cellmates came to the rescue. They lent me one of their own outfits, the regular Chinese women's clothes, trousers and a coatlike waist, called a *saam*.

Those cellmates of mine were wonderful! They were in prison because their fathers or husbands had been landowners or former Nationalist officers. Cultured, refined, gentle, they suffered in that den of evil and corruption more than others would. Later, when I was thrown in with women of another stripe in the Canton prison, I realized how lucky I had been in Wee Chao.

One was a business woman; Precious Living was her name. Another, Virtuous Joy, had been a well-to-do farmer's daughter. There was a young matron and her growing daughter. Dearest of them all was Clear Tinkling Bell whom we called the "Venerable Bon," which means something approximating the "Wise Girl."

Bon had a vivacious personality. She used it to help me, often. All the guards were infatuated with her.

"Now, of course, I hate foreigners," she would proclaim loudly, when the guards peered into the cell. "But certainly she looks harmless enough. The ridiculous clothes she wears would let anyone know that she can't be too clever." And thus she would fend off any scolding I was due to get for talking, lying down, or praying a bit, or for doing anything else we were strictly forbidden to do.

Emptying the toilet buckets was a regular morning job. We took turns until Bon came. Then, one morning, I shouldered the pole with the two buckets dangling at the ends, preparing to proceed under heavy guard to the dumping place, filthy beyond description. The Venerable Bon turned on the guards. "What are you thinking of!" she shouted, indignantly. "That idiotic American can't do this! She'll spill it all over everything and dirty up our place worse than it is. Here!" and she pushed me so hard I

landed in a corner. In a second, she had taken the pole herself and swung out of the cell followed by the guards.

One of the guards, Comrade Ue, was completely charmed by Bon. When the hated North Chinese guards were out of sight, he spent his guard-duty time with his eye glued to the peephole in our door. Bon used him to get notes in and out. One day she hinted broadly that she wanted me to teach her English.

"If only we could get English books from those vile American Sisters outside!" she sighed.

Soon, Comrad Ue threw into the cell an English-Chinese New Testament and a small rosary. Later he smuggled in thread for us to mend our clothes with, and a picture of Our Lady. This picture became our shrine. Bon pasted it up above the door, where the guards outside could not see it.

Every few days we went through an investigation; four men and a woman composed an inspecting squad. Everything we used was torn apart and felt and inspected and examined, practically with a microscope, in the fear that we had poison or sharp knives. They were always expecting prisoners to commit suicide, and sometimes, despite the precautions, they did.

One day the little rosary was a burning mass of perspiration in my hand, as the woman inspector was tearing at my clothes, feeling every inch of my body for contraband material. We were jammed in that cell—six prisoners and five inspectors in a room about 12 by 7 feet. We could not move without touching somebody. Bon, whose inspection was finished, moved beside me and slipped the rosary out of my hand. With her foot she gently edged the New Testament under the bedding, already inspected.

But one of the inspectors noticed the picture of Our Lady over the door. With one twist of his hand, he ripped it from the wall and threw it into the corridor.

After they had gone, Bon poked her head out of the cell. "Do you see a paper on the floor?" she asked the guards with a dazzling smile. "I dropped it out by mistake."

Always obliging to our Bon, the guards looked up and down the filthy corridor. Nothing.

Supervisor Wong came by, another of her conquests. She asked him to look, too. When he could not find it, we gave up hope.

Near midnight, a light flashed in the room and a crumpled piece of paper fluttered in. "Hide it, quick!" a voice muttered as the window clanged shut again. Bon jumped up. She felt around in the dark for the rice bowls where a few grains of soggy rice were left. She smashed the rice into a sticky pulp. Climbing on top of the women lying there on the floor, she reached the space over the door and pasted the picture back on the wall.

In the morning, she was laughing hysterically. Our Lady was upside down!

This was the one amusing incident. Endless questionings dragged out the night hours. Wormy rice and half-cooked vegetables, I knew, were filling me with disease and intestinal parasites. A skin infection covered me from head to foot; every part of my body was either sore or itching. Numbness was spreading over my legs; indeed I had no feeling in them from the hips down. My veins were distended from lack of exercise. I found it difficult to walk. Stairs were almost impossible; I would grasp the railing and pull myself up one stair at a time.

I could do nothing about the food, but I determined to remedy the lack of exercise. Each morning we rolled up our bed mats to clear what small space we had. There we danced, jumped around, bent our legs and arms in a desperate effort to keep them functioning. Exercise helped, too, to digest our food, such as it was. A steady diet of rice, with no meat or grease of any kind was playing havoc.

Daily, we studied communism. An officer visited each cell in the morning and gave us the theme for the day. Standing at the door of our dark and fetid room, he rattled off woodenly something like this:

"What does communism bring to the people? Why, freedom! Freedom to express one's ideas. Freedom to assist the Government. Freedom to expand and grow. Freedom is the natural outgrowth of communism."

The end of the lesson was a panegyric on Mao. "Long live Mao, our star, our guide, our life!"

I looked at my cellmates. Their legs were swollen with beriberi. Their bodies were scrawny and thin, their eyes gaunt with pain. I felt through my body the damp cold of those rough stone walls and smelled the awful stench of unclean bodies and filthy floors.

"He forgot something," Bon said to us with a wan half-smile. "Communism gives us the right to suffer."

Besides physical exercise, we gave ourselves a daily spiritual workout. Every night, we said three Hail Mary's to implore Our Lady's protection. The women became tremendously interested in Catholic doctrine. Up to this time, being wealthy wives and daughters, they had not had occasion to think of Our Lord as having been born poor and suffering; but the thought that God Himself came to earth and lived here as a poor man touched them now. When I told them the story of the crucifixion, He won their hearts completely.

Of course, anything connected with religion had to be top-secret. We used to huddle together, during the time for study; in the corner farthest from the guards. A Chinese newspaper was spread in front of us as if we were absorbed in the glorious exploits of the Red regime. But tales of the Man of Sorrows, the Sacrificial Lamb, and the Mother of All Mankind warmed listening hearts.

I tried to add Christian charity to their natural good will and kindliness. We shared everything. One of us was receiving medicines from outside because she had dystentery, and after she recovered she kept getting them in order to give them to another woman who had no outside contacts. The Sisters used to send me food now and then; I shared this with the others. They found

some of it hard to eat, especially the cheese, but by this time nobody was "choosy" about food. Precious Living was released after several months in prison. Although she knew she was going out to face real poverty, she left behind her blankets for Virtuous Joy. The two had been bedding down together because Virtuous Joy had no blanket of her own.

Several asked for Baptism. But I put them off because I felt that there should be some testing time under normal conditions, lest the enthusiasm of prison wane in the light of ordinary existence. They knew that in the case of execution, Baptism of Desire would carry them through.

It was now November. I had been in prison for five months. Do not suppose that one ever gets used to prison. The body does; it contracts and gets pale and, in the end, moves through the day somehow. But the mind and heart strain at the bars twenty-four hours a day. The yearning for sunshine and freedom grows through the months until you realize that this is the real suffering. Not the hunger, the lice, the torture, the smell, the filth, the cruelty—these cannot touch the real "you." Even if none of these things oppressed your body, still the "you" would be in agony.

We yearned so for freedom that we decided to put it up to Our Lady. We would make a novena; each would say a rosary every day. This was quite a lot for my brand-new catechumens; they had just learned the prayers. The intention: that each of us would leave the cell before the end of November.

All the first day, the rosary passed from one chilblained hand to another, as we pretended to study. Virtuous Joy, the well-to-do farmer's daughter, was a picture as she prayed, her pale gaunt face imploring Our Lady so earnestly. "Dear Blessed Mother," I thought, "please, if you answer nobody else, please get her out of here."

Early the next morning, Virtuous Joy was executed. I was stunned at such an answer to my prayers. But when I thought of her long suffering, her sweet patience, her kindliness under most difficult circumstances, I saw the wisdom of Our Lady's quick

reply. Baptized in her ardent desire, she must have gone directly from death to Life.

We kept the rosary going all that day, too.

Again, in the morning, another of us was called—Golden Orchid this time. She had no trial, no defense, no jury, no formal sentence. She was simply called out and never came back. With eighteen others she was tortured beyond the possibility of thought, beaten, and finally shot.

Things go by the calendar in Red China. Several days before a "purge" is launched, the jail is cleared out to make room for new prisoners. A materialistic philosophy takes no account of souls. Man has only a body which occupies space. When you need the space you get rid of the body which is occupying it.

All that day we were making room for the influx. One hundred and fifty new prisoners were taken. Already we were seven hundred prisoners in this one jail and ours was only one of four in the city. All that night prisoners were moved from cell to cell, being squeezed and crowded until the last wretch was behind the bars. All night long—terror, noise, confusion. Everything was done in utter blackness. A woman in chains was thrown in with us; we did what we could to make her comfortable.

Weary and discouraged, all the women—even Bon!—were sobbing. I had my hands full trying to comfort them.

Just before dawn, the end of an endless nightmare of horror, the guard shouted in at the barred door: "197051!"

It was my number!

This was just how he had called Golden Orchid yesterday and Virtuous Joy the day before. "My execution day!" I thought.

I gathered myself together with a prayer and waited for him to open the door and take me out.

But nothing happened.

At about ten that morning, the same thing occurred. A guard called "197051"—nothing more.

I went to pieces completely. I cried all day in an agony of un-

certainty. It was my cellmates' turn now. They clustered around trying to console me.

At night, I was called again. This time, the guards unlocked the door. I stood between them, ready for that last walk to death.

To my surprise, they took me to the examining room. Again, I faced the chief examiner across a desk.

"Sign this!" he said and handed me a paper.

It was a "confession." It said, "I kept opium in my room and bought and sold it. I possessed an unregistered radio."

I sighed. We had been through this so often.

"I can't do this," I said.

"All you have to do is to sign these papers and you will be in your convent tonight."

I thought, "They need the room for somebody else, but they are afraid to kill me."

I wouldn't sign.

Two hours passed. The same browbeating, the same twisting questions, the same tying and gagging. The same threats of unspeakable torture.

I thought, "This is really the end!"

It was not for myself that I refused. I was thinking of the Church. If I could prevent it, there would never be a document to prove that a Sister had trafficked in opium.

"I must have time to think," I stalled.

"What have you been thinking about, these five months in our prisons!" the examiner asked as he rose, slammed his pen down on the desk, and left the room. The others went out after him.

I did not know where they went. I did not know what they planned to do. I was alone with the papers before me.

It was the first time they had ever done that. I got up and started pacing back and forth, my mind and heart in turmoil. How I longed to be in my convent that night, as he had promised! What joy to see those dear faces, and to know that they would not be worried about me any more. We could make light

of our privations, if we three were together. A stroke of the pen would do it. The simple walking, taking long strides without bumping into people, or baggage, or filthy buckets, was a physical joy. My head cleared as I strode back and forth.

What sort of service will I render the Church, if I permit them to shake my resolution? They could use this signed confession to prove to the Chinese Catholics that Sisters were criminals—truly wolves in sheep's clothing. The Church had been most severe with opium smokers, refusing them the sacraments and the Church's privileges. Small wonder the Communists had planted opium on me; they could show the people that the Sisters themselves dealt in the hated drug.

Furthermore, how did I know they would keep their word to release me? With my confession, they might arrest the others as accomplices. Then we would all be in jail.

And on top of all the reasons was this: the statement simply was not true. Could I put my name to a lie?

As for the radio, that was another proposition. It is no sin to own a radio. Catholics would understand that I had been unable to register it, since we had been confined to the house for months.

One of my grandfathers was a Scot; he left a wee drop of canniness in my blood. Maybe we could strike a bargain.

I knew the Communists' position. They needed to clear out the prison; they were tired of questioning me and getting nowhere. But they were afraid to kill me outright lest I be a martyr in the local Catholics' eyes and, perhaps, rouse up sympathy in America. They were not out to kill priests and Sisters; the main objective was to discredit them. A few thousand foreign missioners in China were not such a problem; it was the four million Chinese Catholics who could make trouble for the Party.

My mind was made up.

Once that was done, I really enjoyed the blessed privacy of that room. I walked up and down, peeked out at the starlit sky and breathed deep of the clean night air. Of course, I knew they were watching me from peepholes somewhere, but I could almost

forget it. It had been so long a time since I was free of smelly dark bodies, of encumbering baggage and bedding, of dank stone corridors slippery with God-knows-what.

The soldiers started to come back in; last of all the examiner. "Well?" he queried.

I put forth my bargain offer.

"I will sign the paper about the radio but not the opium confession."

It startled him. He had had no instructions from headquarters about the possibility of this turn of events. He seemed to be on the point of saying "Agreed!"—when he must have thought: "What if the higher-ups become angry with me for not getting an opium confession?" This time, it was he who had to have time to think.

"Back to your cell!" he shouted and they took me out.

SEVENTEEN

The Back of the Book Is Wrong

Already somebody had taken my place in the cell, but the women gladly moved over to give me space on the floor when I returned. Nobody spoke out loud, for we had to observe profound silence from the end of the evening rally until rising time next morning. But there were many happy squeezes of the hand and whispered welcomes there in the dark.

Long after the little excitement had died down, and no one stirred in our cell except for an occasional half-conscious digging after lice, I lay awake turning hot and cold by turns.

How would they react to my bargain terms? They would get rid of me, that was sure, but would it be by release or execution? Had I done right, or should I have stood firm on both accusations? Then, once more I took hold of myself.

"It's done, now," common sense told me. "Stop stewing about it. You need all the rest you can get. Come now, be sensible and go to sleep while you have the chance."

And I did, which shows what you can do when you make up your mind to it. Screams, yells, clanking chains, lice, chilling cold, mental torture, smells, and my cellmates, who were always throwing their arms or legs on top of me and breathing into my face—all faded from consciousness and I slept. Thanks be to God for His wonderful gift of sleep!

Nonetheless, anxiety returned with the light of day. I trembled when, once more, "197051!" resounded through the cell. It was not the death summons, this time; it was the freedom-or-death summons and I knew not which.

The same examining room. The same investigator. The same guards standing round. But there was the brisk air of a decision having been made which needed only to be carried out with dispatch.

"Here is your religious garb," he said. And one of the guards threw over my arm my habit and what was left of my veil. My rosary came out of a cupboard and was thrown on the desk, also my fountain pen and pencil, my medal—everything that had been taken from me.

"Is everything there?" the inspector asked, beckoning me to approach the desk.

"Yes!" I said, really not looking at all. My heart was pounding at the vision of freedom. "I won't even have to sign the radio confession!" I exulted to myself.

"Good," he grunted. "Go to your cell and get your blankets and other baggage. The guards will then conduct you farther."

I flew. I flew. Far ahead of the soldiers, I almost raced back to the cell. In a flash I changed into my habit, returning the Chinese women's coat and trousers to their owner. "I'm being released!" I said breathlessly, as the women stood around. "I'll do everything I can to work for your release, too. Oh, how good God is!"

Unselfishly, they rejoiced with me and helped me, tying up my bundle, straightening out my habit, looking to see whether I had forgotten anything in the excitement.

The guards waited outside. Then, when I stepped through the door, they began tying me up again as we had been when transferred to the other prison. I was too stunned to talk at first.

"What are you tying me for?" I whispered at last.

"All prisoners are tied when going between prisons," they said in a matter-of-fact tone.

It was a dreadful, dreadful blow. The idea of a third solution —neither freedom nor execution—had never occurred to me. I had steeled myself for execution; but this was worse. Another prison. Perhaps a worse one. Away from Wee Chao. Away from any contact with the Sisters. Dear God—really?

In a daze, I walked to the prison entrance. I saw the Bishop and Father Zeller there, also tied, but hardly smiled at them. "They must have refused too," I noted mechanically. "Well, thank God, at least I'll know they are in the same prison. That will be some sort of comfort, anyhow."

We marched through the streets to the police station. I looked right and left, hoping to catch sight of somebody I knew who would inform the Sisters. But I saw nobody.

It was November and a bitter wind was blowing. My thin summer habit whipped around my legs. I was so unused to exercise that several times I turned completely around like a top before I could gain equilibrium and battle forward in the wind again. My hands clutched the baggage hard; when we reached the station they might have been hooks made of metal for all the feeling I had in them. Loosening my fingers from the rope was like making a hypnotized person open his hand.

It was late afternoon and almost dark when we reached the police station. I was put into a cell like a cage in a zoo, for one entire side of the room was made of iron bars. Communist soldiers came by, trying to talk to me. I said nothing and they laughed and went off, only to be succeeded by a new group who had heard that a queer creature had landed in the precincts.

It was very cold, so I walked up and down to keep warm. I counted the steps—eight across and eight back, eight across and eight back! I suppose I should have been praying, but you can't pray in circumstances like that. Every now and then I offered it all to God: "If You want it this way, if You can bring good out of it, if this will bring graces to the Communists—well and good. I gladly bend my little will to conform to Yours." Then I'd be

off, thinking, "It's so cold. I'm hungry. My legs ache, sitting, walking, or standing. Why don't they come and get me!" Up and down, across and back, paying no attention to the ribald soldier sight-seers.

At last, a new guard came on. He took one look at me.

"Walking is forbidden!" he said. So I sat on my heels in a corner and shivered.

A Communist girl came at last to search my person. She was thorough. The soldiers watched through the bars to see that the girl performed her task completely. I was utterly embarrassed. I could think only of Christ crucified. The thought, "You went through more than this for my soul," began to circulate through me like a tonic; "what a privilege for me to suffer this embarrassment to gain souls for You!"

Human beings are dull! With all the example of centuries before us, we still expect to gain priceless souls by mere lip service to God. Our Lord Himself named the price—blood and agony—and paid it first. Souls have never become cheaper.

It's easy enough when kneeling in a quiet chapel to offer oneself entirely to serve God's purpose. But let Him take you at your word, let Him draw from you some of the blood and agony He needs—and you shrink away.

I smiled wryly to myself as I picked up my bundle and prepared to follow the guard. "That's me all over, Lord," I told Him. "Big on promises; but not much on paying. You ought to know me by now."

In the darkness, the Bishop, Father Zeller, and I were marched across the street to the attic of another building. It seemed to be a storage place for straw, unhulled rice, and chopped-up sweet potato leaves. We three were left there for the night.

We still had had no dinner or supper. I took the opportunity to go to Confession; it had been many months since I had had the chance to get sacramental absolution.

"Say three Hail Mary's for the persecutors of the Church,

Sister," Father said in penance. Then he and the Bishop confessed to each other. We all felt the better for it.

Who was there in the morning? Mrs. Plum! The dear, faithful woman had brought rice—good, steaming rice—and a big sweater that I recognized as coming from that sealed-up room. How she had heard about us, or whether the Sisters had sent the rice, or indeed, whether they were still in Wee Chao, I did not find out. Mrs. Plum was forbidden to say a word to us.

We stayed there in the attic about a week. Mrs. Plum came every day with good rice and substantial food. I had more exercise than I had had for some time, walking around the big room. At long last I could feel the strength coming back into my legs.

Then one morning early in December, the order came to pack our bedding up and prepare for a journey. Mrs. Plum was there, as usual, with her good breakfast. She must have known we were going, although neither she nor we said a word. I'll never forget her face as, silently, she passed us the steaming rice with tears pouring down her cheeks.

I never saw her afterward, but someday in heaven, if I make the grade, I'll have a chance to tell her all the gratitude that welled up in my heart that morning. I'll probably have to look her up in the better residential district up there where the martyrs have their mansions. A woman as brave as she has probably died for her Faith by now.

Right after breakfast, we lined up single file for the 20-mile hike to Lim Chai. First a guard. Then Father Zeller. Then a guard. Then I. A guard, then the Bishop. And so on. There were several other prisoners being transferred to this little town where the jail was a makeshift affair, and not so crowded as yet.

We were not tied. We carried our food and bedding; but that is not too difficult if one has two arms free. At first the guards were strict about no talking, but after an hour or so on the road,

they didn't mind it. For a while the Bishop even walked beside me, carrying much of my burden. He was a great big man, son of farmer folk in Iowa. Even in his seminary days at Maryknoll he was known as a prodigious worker. Thirty years in China had howled around his head but could not budge his steady mastery of any situation. The lines of his mouth were deep; his massive brow was furrowed; and his eyes had the crinkly lines of one who has narrowed them against the glare of many summers in South China.

He was hearty as he strode beside me, telling jokes of seminary days at Maryknoll, anecdotes about the "Old General" as he called Maryknoll's cofounder, Bishop James A. Walsh. He must have known that only a buoyant spirit could take me on that long hike. At rest places along the way, he would never let me really relax, lest I find it too hard to get on the road again.

When we passed through a town, all such informalities were sternly repressed. And for several hours before we reached Lim Chai the guards wore their sternest faces. We had made the 20 miles in nine or ten hours. I was indeed glad to sit down in the office of the Lim Chai jail and just rest my legs.

There were searchings, of course. The Chinese prisoners were taken first. Pockets, shoes, hats, and every layer of clothing were gone through minutely. Then they were led away.

Father Zeller and the Bishop were next. My heart sank as their rosaries were dropped to the floor. Father wore a medal around his neck; this was wrenched off and thrown aside too. Breviaries, a small bottle of Mass wine, some hosts, and even their shaving kits joined the stuff on the floor.

It was my turn. My watch, medal, rosary, and even the pins from my veil were confiscated. It had been a hot walk even though it was December, for the sun is warm all the year round, although the nights may be cold. My hair was sticky, and somehow I couldn't find my comb in the baggage. The Bishop pulled his comb from his pocket and nonchalantly handed it to me. It

was a small act—but it showed how he watched for any chance to help me.

The veil itself was handed back to me. But with no pins, it was impossible to attach it to the frame, so I tied it around my head like a kerchief. This is the way I wore it for the next two months.

The Lim Chai jail was the best of the eight different jails I stayed in during the next four months. It seems to me that I should write a "Traveling Prisoner's Guide to China's Jails." It ought to be of use to missioners of the future to know where you can get the best light and air, which jail excels in cuisine, and the temper of the guards in the various inns the Government runs for its unwilling guests. But you can never be sure that the service will stay the same in any of them. Sooner or later, a new warden comes along or the Government orders a purge, and right away the jail accommodations get worse.

However, Lim Chai started off well. It had been a rich landlord's home. My cell, where I stayed with the other women, was the attic, a three-sided room which opened on to the Heavenly Well of the house. Our bed was the floor, covered with straw. I used that precious sweater for a pillow and snuggled under the Chinese quilt at night. There were no sheets, of course. I slept with one of the women prisoners who had no quilt of her own; we kept each other warm.

The days were sunless and quite cold. Most of the time I stayed under the quilt. There were no books to read, no chairs to sit on, no light except a glimmer in the early evening when a small lamp was lit. This upper room was right under the roof and had been used for storage. It was cold and drafty, and all the smoke from the kitchen down below seemed to settle there.

When the meal bells rang, twice a day, we marched down the stairway to an open yard near the kitchen. There were, perhaps, two hundred prisoners in this jail. We formed in groups of six around each rice bucket, squatting on our heels. The rice was very dry, the vegetables were sandy and often wormy. It was a question of "first come, first get." The chopsticks went flying.

Nobody wasted time in table conversation, for the one who could cram the fastest got the most. More than once, I had a choice morsel on the way to my bowl when a vicious pair of chopsticks intercepted and away it went to somebody else's mouth. I got to be quite adept at the game too. I learned to block and tackle, to feint and duck, and before long I was getting my fair share of dinner.

But "fair share" was never enough. I was often very hungry, especially at night. I think, maybe, we got less than at Wee Chao, but it may only have seemed less because I was so much more active.

Every morning we were counted in roll call and went downstairs to the court for morning wash-up with a wooden basin of warm water. Every other day we each had a bucket of hot water for a bath. This sudden cleanliness did marvels for the skin disease which had tortured me in the Wee Chao prison. Some few times, the stove broke down and we had to go to the brook for cold ablutions.

I soon found out that this was a man's prison. The guards did not care very much what the women did. There were only about thirty of us up there in the attic. After a week or so, they even permitted us to go to the brook to wash our clothes, whereas the men were never allowed out of their cells. I took the opportunity to wash the Bishop's and Father Zeller's clothes, too. I was feeling much stronger and my legs were almost normal, thanks to the exercise and cleanliness.

We procured needle and thread and started mending our clothes. One of the women was an expert at making cloth shoes. Looking at the wretched things on my feet, I determined to make something better for myself and found the task was fascinating. Under expert tutelage, I produced a pair of shoes which stood me in good stead for months.

I liked shoemaking so much that my friend and I started to outfit the whole cell. This made me many friends who, in return, often did nice things for me.

We could also go to the bathroom now, merely reporting to the guard on duty. There were no foul smells to sicken one. All this freedom seemed like the veriest heaven to me after Wee Chao.

I had nothing to pray with here, because my rosary had been confiscated at the entrance, but that problem was soon solved. The landlord family who owned the house was now confined in just a few rooms. The woman of the house was very friendly to me and secretly lent me a small knife. With this I whittled out a "rosary rod," which was just ten little bumps on a bamboo stick, but which served the purpose admirably. I got such satisfaction out of it that I made others for the Bishop, Father Zeller, and another Catholic among the men. I picked up the sticks in the court, hiding them in my clothes until I got upstairs. One quickly learns prison tricks.

Christmas! It was much as the first Christmas was—a three-walled shelter and a bed of straw. Silent night, Holy night! No poinsettias, no Christmas tree, no holly, no wreaths. No Mass, no Holy Communion. But these had not been there that first Christmas night, either. It seemed to me that I left 1951 and went back, back, back into time, sweeping past centuries until I stopped right in the cave at Bethlehem and mingled with the crowd of shepherds. It was very real to me. I saw myself helping around, trying to tidy up the cave while the Blessed Mother was busy showing her Son to the visitors. Then, when they had all gone, I knelt beside her and adored the tiny God-Man. I was deeply happy.

This was the Christmas planned for me by the Host of the Feast, Himself. He also included a bit of Christmas cheer. The Catholics in Lim Chai had heard we were there. At about nine in the morning, the guards brought me a share of the Christmas dinner these unknown friends had sent to the Bishop, Father, and me: a good hot meat broth, Chinese cakes, and rice. The donors had to taste them to prove that they were not poison, but the miracle was that we got the dinner at all.

Things tightened in January. New prisoners were constantly brought in; sometimes just a few, at other times as many as ten or fifteen. Although in one day sixteen were released and seven executed, still the prison became more and more crowded.

The landlord's family got the worst of it all. One by one, all their rooms were taken. There were about twenty people in the family—father, mother, grandmother, six children, and a number of poor relations, sort of quasi servants. Once they were all roped up like prisoners and were led away to the tune of trumpets and drums and the waving of big red flags. They were gone for two days. When they came back, they found themselves allocated two small rooms in their own house. Every blessed thing they could earn a living with was taken away—buffaloes, plows, seed, and lands. They ate rice left over by us prisoners and there was precious little of that, you may be sure. Sometimes they had to go to the Farmers' Association and beg for food. If they got it, it was well peppered with contempt for lazy folk who sponged on the People's generosity.

Interviews and questionings filled the nights once more. No one mentioned the opium to me, however; my refusal to sign the confession had evidently closed that subject. It was never mentioned again in any subsequent investigation. I wished I had refused the radio confession, too. For the questions now were all about espionage and our means of getting information to the U.S. State Department.

I was always hopeful that the situation would clear up, for the whole case seemed paper-thin, but each interview only complicated matters. They had found an American flag, a pair of earphones and, of course, another radio in the Bishop's house. This, for the Communists, clinched the case.

At the end of January we were all three called to the office at the same time—the Bishop, Father Zeller, and I. It was plain that we constituted a unit now, a crime ring, a nefarious gang, an espionage team, a cabal of international desperadoes. "Well," I thought to myself, "no use going in for crime half-heartedly, or

my nephews, steeped in TV and comic strips, would be ashamed of their auntie!"

In justice to these investigators I should say here that I think they really believed the accusations against us. The whole system of Communism rests on blind faith, a faith based not on reason, but on twisted reason. The logic of it goes something like this:

Mao has said that all missioners are spies.

Therefore: All missioners are spies.

This American Sister is a missioner.

Therefore: This American Sister is a spy.

All spies communicate secretly with their state departments.

Therefore: This American Sister communicates with the American State Department.

The radio is a means of communication.

Therefore: This radio she had was her means of communication with the American State Department.

Even though the radio was obviously not a high-powered sending set, it could be used as evidence because, according to such reasoning, I must have had a high-powered set secreted somewhere.

This unique form of deductive reasoning appears to us ridiculous, and of course it is. But there are millions of people who work their problems backward. They get the answer first and work back from that.

I remember back in the days when my legs were getting too long to fit under the sixth-grade desks we had an arithmetic problem. The answer in the back of the book was, plain as day, $2.46. Yet, every time I worked it, the answer on my scratch pad was $24.60. Furthermore, it was reasonable that five pairs of high-button shoes, even in those days, would cost that much. I did the thing over and over, checking and rechecking. Still, $24.60. At last, my father chased me off to bed.

The next day, chumming around the school yard before class, I said nonchalantly to several of my friends, "By the way, what did you get as the answer to No. 9?"

One and all, they had $2.46. This was alarming. I was afraid to tell them what I had gotten. Then came the fearsome moment when Sister told me, "Go to the board and write your solution for No. 9."

Again, as I wrote it on the board, I checked each step; again, the answer was $24.60.

"How many got $24.60?" Sister asked.

Nobody else had. They were in smug agreement. The back of the book was on their side and it is a powerful ally.

"That's too bad," Sister commented, "because $24.60 is right. Your books have a typographical error there."

I remember this because I got a gold star for it, and at St. Casimir's we didn't get gold stars for nothing. It taught me, too, that the back of the book makes mistakes sometimes. From that time on, if it agreed with me—all right. Otherwise, we fougnt it out on even terms.

Fervent Communists believe their leaders with a faith which blinds them to everything else. They reason backward from the conviction to the crime and further back to the evidence. Even such tricks as planting opium are explained easily by saying that if I had not traded in opium, I most certainly had done something just as bad, and this ruse would save considerable investigation. This is the crux of Communist justice—you are guilty first. That fact is established without question by some statement from Mao or Stalin. The function of the justice department is merely to accumulate evidence to support the conviction, and to wring a confession of guilt from the prisoner.

So, when the Bishop, Father Zeller, and I faced each other in the prison office at Lim Chai, late in January, 1952, we had no hope of release. The sentence, "You are being transferred to Canton; prepare to leave," was about what we expected.

We returned to our cells, put together our bedding, toothbrushes, and small wads of extra clothes, and reported to the front office.

EIGHTEEN

Easy Stages to Canton

Now began a strange journey. Our destination was Canton but we seemed to go by a hit-or-miss route, staying in one jail or stopping at another en route, or, if no jail were available, staying in the police station. Sometimes it was for only an overnight stay; sometimes for a week or longer. We always had the same guards, however, whenever we moved. Furthermore, while investigators might change from place to place, the secretary stayed with us.

This little man kept the whole case in his head. He had written out in "grass characters" every word spoken at interviews, but with his amazing memory he hardly ever needed to refer to the papers. He was most unfriendly, as befitted his responsibility. While the guards sometimes broke down, he never did.

We used almost every kind of locomotion—bicycles, boats, rafts, buses, and our own two feet. It was quite a nomadic life. Sometimes we were tied; sometimes not. Often things relaxed, especially after the guards realized we were not intent on running away. At one time, in a bus, we were chatting quite freely in English—the Bishop, Father Zeller, and I. One of the bus passengers said, "They must be Russians; they're having such a good time! And those soldiers are showing them our country." We had none of the bitter demonstrations that Father Langemann and Sister Vera went through.

One of the first jails we stayed at was in—of all places—Wang

Ding! It was the mission compound, of course. The house which I had left a year before was now the Farmers' Association headquarters for the district. The church and rectory were prison and police headquarters, respectively.

It broke my heart to see the old mission which I had visited so often in my ten years at Kwang Do. Large red streamers, newspaper size in width, were pasted in a band that ran across the entire front of the building. On it were written the names of everybody in the village together with his allotment of fields. The walls of the rooms were posted with liberation songs. I sat on a sawhorse in such a room and wondered whether I could bear to see any more such evidence of the annihilation of my lifework.

But how foolish to speak of annihilation! The seed which, by the grace of God, my unworthy hands had helped to sow in Chinese hearts is indestructible. It may be underground, but it is there. I soon found that out.

The Chinese Sisters still clustered around the house across the street. I say "clustered," because most of them did not actually live there. Sister Joseph, in lay clothes, had her home there and the others frequently came in to see her. The police knew it for a religious center in the town and they had the Sisters spotted, of course. For this reason, they could get nothing but the most menial work to do and had to be content with the meanest wages. In the distribution of the fields, they had been allotted exactly nothing.

Sister Joseph, either by paying off the guards or by her own charming personality, got permission to see me.

"Do you remember Gnet Ts'in and Wiouc Moi?" she asked.

They had been postulants at the time of our dispersal, young girls of sixteen or so.

"Well, they went back to middle school," she continued. "Of course, they tried to take no part in the antireligious programs, but they were soon noticed for it. One Friday afternoon, they were made to kneel on broken pottery before the whole school

and ordered to curse the Church and ridicule the Papal Nuncio to China.

" 'Why should we do these things?' " they asked.

" 'Because the Criminal Riberi has condemned the National Church movement. That is high treason.' "

Sister Joseph told me that the girls refused. For four hours they remained on their knees while the teachers and other pupils made fun of them and hit them over the head. They said the rosary the whole time.

The next morning, Saturday, they were afraid not to come to school lest the teachers and pupils come to their homes and drag them out before their parents' eyes. So they reported to class again. The same thing happened—but for all day. Four hours in the morning and four in the afternoon, they knelt on rough pottery saying the rosary while the entire school made sport of them. By nightfall, one of them was almost out of her mind. Both of them fainted several times, but the she-wolves who lead the school threw water on them and made them kneel upright again.

On Monday, they went back. This time, a hellish new sport was tried. The teachers brought filth and smeared it on the girls' faces. All this time the girls kept silence, saying the rosary. At last they were permitted to struggle out to the street and go home. They were too ill to think of returning to school and were left in peace.

When people talk of the "ruin of the missions," or "the destruction of our lifework," I never quite see the point. How can one consider such things as buildings a lifework? They are important, they are needed on the mission fields, even essential to the progress of the Church. But the missioner's lifework is the building of a spirit such as these two young girls had.

Christianity follows the law of love. It is a milk-and-water religion unless there is strong giving, total giving. Not all Chinese Catholics can measure up to the full stature of martyrs. But

that some do is a pledge of eternal life for the Church in China.

We left Wang Ding to continue life on the road. At night we three were usually locked up together in a single room. One night, in a police station, I remember that Father Zeller picked out the table for himself while the Bishop shoved a slanting police desk against the wall and slept in the groove formed thereby. They left a sort of army cot for me.

In one town, the inspector told the people that I had confessed to poisoning ten or twelve persons through administering wrong drugs. This sort of thing made me realize that our case was becoming hopelessly confused.

At another overnight stop, the investigator told me, "Because you used Hong Kong currency, you are being sentenced to return to America."

I knew that any number of Chinese businessmen used Hong Kong money. "Is that enough to send me back to America?" I asked.

"There are many other charges against you."

"Will you please tell me what they are?"

"You have spread false propaganda against the Party through Catholic literature."

"Anything else?"

"Yes. The people of the town want you to go away."

Then he showed me pages and pages of signatures appended to a petition requesting the People's Government to send me away. Each one had its thumbprint alongside. I recognized the names of many Catholics in Wee Chao. I was amazed.

"Are all these people against me?"

"Against the Catholic Church in general," he said, complacently folding the papers away in the file case.

I realized then what had been going on during those early prison days in Wee Chao. The Catholics had been threatened:

"You will lose your fields."

"You will never get any travel permits."

"You had better sign—or else!"

Their names might go down on the paper with a thumbprint, too, but I knew their hearts were loyal.

Propaganda is insidious. Repeated loud enough and often enough, it shakes the very foundation of one's judgment. Even years of friendliness crumble under persistent vilification. Who could blame them if even Catholics should think, "Well, perhaps it is true that the foreign Sisters were kind because they wanted to ensnare us. Perhaps it would be better if they went away."

As a mild (very mild, compared to planned Communist propaganda) example of the effect of persistent lying, look at the wild stories that so many Americans believe about the "Chinatowns" of New York or San Francisco. To them, every restaurant is an opium den and every meek little laundryman is leader of a Tong war with six or seven notches in his dagger hilt.

Talking to the guards en route, we found them really convinced that China was rising to her strength and would prove a match for any military power. They had no idea of what a country must be able to produce in the way of tanks, battleships, guns, bombs, and airplanes before it can compete with America. I remember, once, a guard showed us an item in the Communist paper saying that a bicycle factory had been set up in China. "No longer will China be dependent upon foreigners for bicycles. Now, the New China makes her own bicycles!"

A few days later, the same guard proudly brought forth a fountain pen from his vest pocket. "See?" he said. "It says, 'Made in China!' We make our own fountain pens, too. Soon we will be able to conquer America."

The Bishop's mouth twisted in a wry smile. "And how do you propose to do it? Will you ride to America on your bicycles and shoot us with your fountain pens?"

If the guard had understood his irony, the Bishop would have been soundly trounced for his impudence. But it went right over his head; Father Zeller and I were the only ones to enjoy it.

The last leg of the trip was by railroad. We three and our

ubiquitous guards sat on our luggage in the baggage car side by side with all the mailbags. "They forgot to put stamps on us," the Bishop quipped. "We may end up in the dead-letter office."

"We'll end up dead, I'm sure of that," I thought.

By this time we were all but exhausted with the constant shifting. The greatest hardship was carrying our luggage from bus to police station, to boat, to jail, to train. Every morning we packed up our bedding and few personal belongings; every evening we made up our beds in some strange place to rest our weary bones.

It was late February, a raw, cold day, when we landed in Canton station. Lugging the bedding from the baggage car to the station seemed to take all the strength I had, for we walked on the rough ground beside the tracks. But eventually we piled everything into a jeep the Bishop had hired, and we and our guards went off to the provincial Public Peace Office. Here we were dropped, just like parcel-post packages.

"You stay here," the guards said. "Someone will come to get you." They disappeared inside and we saw them no more. Their job was done. They had delivered their goods. The secretary too went his way. We three sat out in the street and waited.

And waited. And waited. Hours went by and we still shivered outside the building. Late afternoon came on. Evening and darkness followed. At last an official came along and we were taken into a small room for questioning.

"What are the charges against you?" the official asked.

"Don't you know?" the Bishop asked.

"I guess you have been breaking the law some way," the official said, with easy assurance. "Better take them to prison," he told one of the soldiers.

"May we have something to eat, first?" Father Zeller asked. "We have had nothing since early morning."

Permission was nicely granted. We sent out for some supper. It was eleven o'clock before it came, but it was most welcome.

At prison, the most thorough personal search took place.

Everything of a religious nature was confiscated. The women inspectors found everything I had accumulated on the trip—rosaries and medals the Chinese Sisters had given me, a few prayer books and cards—everything except the little notched bamboo stick I had made in Lim Chai. Later, I picked up a cord in the yard and knotted it into a five-decade rosary.

I was brought to a cell; the door was closed. An iron bolt was drawn across it. I was a real prisoner, now.

At that hour of the morning, though, I didn't care much. I knew I was alone. Luxuriating in the privacy, I spread my bedding on the floor and slept soundly.

By morning light the cell showed itself to be about 10 by 6 feet. There was a board bed in the corner, the only furnishing. For a few hours, I was presumptuous enough to think that I was to enjoy a private cell in Canton.

Then a young girl joined me. She had been arrested in a hurry and had brought nothing with her. I broke my comb and gave her half of it, and an extra towel. The next day two more women came; then three more, and we were seven women huddled together side by side, sleeping on the floor. The bed board disappeared entirely; it took up too much room. We had no space even to turn from side to side.

The window was up so high that we could barely reach it with our hands if we stood on tiptoe. We saw nothing but four stone walls and ourselves. The soldiers on guard were most unfriendly. A small round hole in the iron door was their peephole. At any hour of the day or night, we could look up to see an eye or an ear at that hole.

Some days were cold, some were hot—but all were airless. I made myself as comfortable as possible. I wore no stockings; I took off my habit cape and scapular. The long tunic and a belt were enough. I wore no veil either; I merely tied my hair back of my ears with a shoestring.

Up to this time sleeping had been no problem for me. I had

made up my mind to sleep and was able to. But here at Canton, I found it almost impossible.

For one thing, the mosquitoes were so bad that I could think of nothing all night long but the scourging of Our Lord, as the pests nipped me, now here, now there. I contracted malaria as a result; I had two attacks in that prison and have had five or six since my release.

The early evening hours were torment. Deprived of sleep the night before, I was dead tired and sleepy, but we were forbidden to lie down before roll call, which was often at 9 or 10 P.M.

The night was weird. Iron bolts and iron doors clanged; the chained feet of prisoners dragged over the stone corridors, the tortured shrieked, and the insane yelled and blubbered alternately. Out of the darkness would come screaming. Or a sound of choking. Or crying or scolding, often. Then, the heavy blows as chains were pounded onto someone's feet.

Three or four times every night, a guard came to each cell. He opened the door and shone a flashlight on each prisoner's face for a long time.

Somehow, I never had enough water. We got two cups of cold water a day which served for a face wash, bath, and laundry. In addition, we had two bowls of drinking water for each prisoner. I don't know whether it was full of disinfectant or not, but it was very hard to drink because it tasted so queer.

Served twice a day, the rice was clean. But the vegetable was often sandy and wormy. It was never cooked enough. Knowing Chinese methods of farming, I felt sure that I was a living exhibit of parasitology.

The daily schedule was broadcast by a whistle and a series of thunderous announcements:

"Get up!"

"Wash your face!"

"Get your vegetable bowls ready!"

"Rice being served!"

"Study!" (This was for Communist indoctrination periods of two hours a day.)

"Prepare for rest!"

"Go to bed!"

I never knew for certain, but I believe there were between eight hundred and a thousand prisoners in this jail. It was only one of several in Canton.

The stench, the sights, the lack of even elemental privacy sickened me. Worse yet, I felt my mind slipping away. Perhaps it was the lack of sleep; perhaps the parasites or the malaria germs; maybe it was simply the long drag of almost a year in prisons. At any rate, it became impossible to concentrate on anything.

This was especially hard during the questionings when I had to remember what I had said last time in response to the same question. If I were mixed up on even a word, that horrible little secretary would pounce on me with the right answer.

"You said thus-and-so. Do not try to deceive the People's Government."

Sitting under a bright light in the examining room, I heard the questions shot at me from the darkened periphery. Sometimes they came from in front, sometimes from the sides or from behind. I was weary, weary, weary of it all. I tried doggedly to stick to "yes" and "no." But in the battle of wits I was no match for three or four well-rested, well-fed investigators. I really could not be sure of what I was asked or what I answered. Dull as my mind was, a fear haunted me lest I say or do something against the Church.

By this time we were eight in the 10-by-6-foot cell—five women and three children. We all needed cheering, heaven knows. One of the women had left six children at home, one of them quite small. The "state" was taking care of them. She envied the two women whose children were with us; and they envied her.

To comfort myself, as well as them, I set up a prenursery school with the three children. It gave me exercise too, for I had to be

all the toys wrapped up in one. At one time I was a play horse, getting down on all fours, crawling up and down that tiny cell with one or two on my back. Or I would be an airplane with a single passenger aboard on my shoulders, spinning around our small world as we dropped down on the airfields of Hong Kong, Shanghai, America, and all over Europe. The flights were short, very short, for the poor old airplane had to go into hangar under her quilt for a good breathing spell after only a few turns in the stratosphere.

I often thought, those cold nights of March, that I had reached bottom. "I can't go any lower; that's a comfort," I thought.

Little did I know!

NINETEEN

Darkest Before . . .

Three or four weeks passed, maybe five. I don't know, for I was beginning to lose track of time. At any rate, it was still cold and damp as Canton is in February and March; and not yet baking hot as it gets to be around April. There seems to be no in-between weather there.

A group of investigators visited my cell and questioned my cellmates.

"How is this prisoner treating you?"

I must say they were loyal to me:

"The American dog gave me one of her towels."

"The foreign devil broke her comb in half to give me something for my hair."

"I share her quilt."

On the whole the impression they gave was that I was the least odious of a contemptible race. Like my friend Venerable Bon in Wee Chao, they spread invective on thick but managed not to say anything against me. We laughed about it later.

These women, like the political prisoners in Wee Chao, were a high grade of Chinese womanhood.

A few days afterward, I was told to pack my things once more. Following the guard, I left the cozy little 10-by-6 cell and started descending stairs and more stairs. We ended in the basement—or rather, in a large cell which was nearly all underground. Two

barred windows, practically at the ceiling, opened directly onto the ground outside. On rainy days the water poured off the street and ran down the walls.

One entire side of the large cell was made entirely of iron bars. There must have been fifty women there, half of them spread over a sleeping shelf about 5 feet from the ground, and the other half lying underneath it. Sprawling, yelling, quarreling, they were China's most wretched women. Born in crime and poverty, they grew up on a dog-eat-dog concept of human relationships. For the most part, they were prostitutes and thieves, river-front brawlers and market hags who would as soon cut your throat as shake your hand. They were women of low minds. Poor things, it was not their fault.

They gave me a riotous welcome.

"Pretty high-class we are with a foreign Sister in with us!"

"Move over and give the lady all the room she needs!"

"What's she got in that bundle? Maybe she's going around giving presents."

"Come on, girls, let's make her feel like one of us!"

They took my bundle, opened it, and examined everything. Fortunately, there was nothing they could envy. By now, I was worse off than they. There was some comfort in the idea.

I had no soap, towel, toothbrush, or washbasin. I could have bought these things, but I had no money at all. I went barefoot, too, for the cloth shoes I had made in Lim Chai absorbed the dampness and never dried out. At least my feet dried, sometimes.

I had but two garments, my old nightgown and my tunic. I wore them alternate weeks with my religious belt around either. I was always cold and damp. It was no surprise to feel constant pain in my chest. I realized I must have a touch of pleurisy.

In my new category of prisoner, I was placed on the work squad, carrying water or food at the ends of a bamboo pole throughout that huge prison. It took twenty minutes walking to get from one end to the other. For the most part, I was glad of

the work; it took me everywhere in the prison and relieved me of the company of my cellmates.

How those women hated me! I represented to them everything they had never had, poor things, and they took out their spite in a hundred ways. Often they pushed me into ditches as I carried the heavy wooden buckets of water. An incident soon occurred which blasted any hope I may have had of winning them over to like me.

A baby was born in the cell. I called to the guards to get the prison doctor. He would not come. Then I remembered four Presbyterian missionaries who were in a cell not too far off. It was a private cell with a locked door. They appeared outside only rarely. One of these, Miss Dalton, was a nurse, I knew. I finally persuaded the guard to call her. She came immediately. My cellmates were completely indifferent to the mother's pain; they would do nothing at all to help.

From the head guard the nurse got her only instruments, a small pair of scissors and a piece of rotted string. He also gave her a 20-cc. ampule of alcohol. With these she went to work.

The string was so old that it broke. After much discussion, a woman prisoner was persuaded to part with a small band-aid she had. The nurse cut this into small strips and rolled them into a sort of clumsy string. Although it was not satisfactory, she used it. All this time, the baby had been hemorrhaging. A ghastly greenish-white, it lay on the stone floor, wrapped only in newspaper. This—at 2 A.M. in March. The nurse now turned her attention to the mother.

I took the baby in my arms. He was so cold! I placed him inside my tunic in an effort to warm him even though I myself was shuddering with cold. In a short time, to my horror, he began to turn black. But since he went on breathing, I kept him next to me.

Only after some time did he change to a natural color. I kept the baby with me until Miss Dalton had done what she could for the mother. Then she took the baby to her own cell.

In the morning, she came back with the prison doctor. He looked at the mother lying on that stone floor. "Oh, she's all right!" he said with some annoyance at being called.

"I wish you would look at the baby," the nurse said. "I think he is bleeding internally."

"Why bother?" he asked and went away.

After that, for some time, the nurse kept the baby in the missioners' cell. She was permitted to use her two cups of drinking water to bathe him. The other missioners shared their two cups with her. As a great concession, she was later given an extra cup of washing water with which to clean her hands.

I thought, "Surely, this nurse's heroic charity will soften my cellmates. After all, they are women, too. Surely, they can place themselves in this mother's position and feel gratitude."

Far from it! Instead, they plotted Miss Dalton's downfall in revenge. They were quite certain that the baby would die; they would be delighted if it did. A few nights after the birth, they held a Communist rally against her. I do not think that Miss Dalton ever knew of this meeting—a wicked cabal which sought to send her to death for an act of sublime charity.

Youn Moi, our cell leader, opened fire.

"What can we report on the American woman in this incident? We all saw the circumstances. What crime did she commit?"

"The People's Government provided her with scissors and string. She deliberately broke the string. Twice, she broke it!"

"That's true! We all saw her break the string!"

"She was so clumsy, she let the baby bleed a long time."

"Yes, that is so!"

"When this baby dies, surely she is guilty of murdering a Chinese baby. The hateful American now shows herself in true colors. She is a baby murderer."

God saw to it that the baby lived and flourished.

Reader, dear reader, sensible reader, American reader, you are saying to yourself, "How can sane people think such things?

How can they twist facts to fit such a prearranged conviction?"

I ask it too. China is not sane now. This comparison has come to me often: it is as if your family should suddenly go insane. They tear at you and beat you and put you out. Yet you know that they are really not themselves. Some desperate fever has stolen their minds. You do your best to reason and plead with them, but what is reason to a raving lunatic?

From that time on, I treated my cellmates as I would treat women who are dangerously insane. I could understand their hatred for me, a foreigner, one of the overbearing white race. No doubt many had had painful contacts with Americans and British. Furthermore, I was plainly a Catholic Sister and the papers of Canton, just then, were full of the trial of the Canadian Sisters accused of murdering thousands of babies in their orphanage.

I could even understand their resentment against Miss Dalton; her charity must have prodded their own consciences uncomfortably. But I could not understand their desertion of one of their own in her hour of need. Nor, furthermore, their desire that the baby should die so that they could vent their spite on Miss Dalton. It meant that, deprived of love and steeped in hate, their very womanhood had turned sour and rotted.

This is the *ultima Thule* of communism. The wretched soul begins hating oppressors and goes on to spew out venom at friends. The witches' cauldron overflows on every living thing, even on himself. The acid eats through flesh and bone so that he comes to hate the marrow of his own bones. Finally, the soul goes screaming out its fury into the pit of hate, hell itself.

There was always a fight going on, some brawl over a stolen toothbrush, or trespass on someone's precious floor space, or suspicion of somebody as a stool pigeon (although they all were, for that's how anybody got special favors). That was why one side of our cell was composed of iron bars—so that guards could see and quickly separate the fighters.

I really suffered there. My spirit suffered. "These are the pains of the damned," I thought, "to know the God of Love and to live in the Kingdom of Hate."

Besides, I could not pray, nor even think on God or anything good. Often, lying there on that stone floor, I made an effort to call to mind the faces of people I loved—my mother and sisters, our Mother General and dear Mother Foundress whom I have always loved so much, the faithful Catholic women, the Chinese Sisters. But their faces would not come clearly. Or, if the faces came, I could not think of their names. They were all so far, far away! Then came the temptation to black despair.

I was forgotten even by the prison authorities. Nobody cared any more whether I had trafficked in opium, hidden bullets, or been a spy. Even a call for questioning would have been welcome; it would have shown that my case was still alive. But weeks passed, and then months, and nothing happened.

This was a "blind prison." No one knew how long he was to be in it, nor for what. Everyone awaited "the day"; whether it be of freedom or of execution, he knew not.

At last a call came for questioning. It was in June, a stifling breathless afternoon. This, in itself, was unusual; most of the interviews had been at night. The guard led me to a rather pleasant room, furnished sparely with desk and files, but cleanswept and fairly cool. The investigator motioned me to sit on a sawhorse in the corner. His manner was courteous, almost kindly. Right away, I was suspicious. "Lord, God, keep me free of traps!" I prayed.

We discussed a number of things—my reaction to the Korean war, the Church's work in China, my personal feeling about America, what relatives I had left, and so on. He seemed interested in me as a human being with natural longings for home. He was well-educated, speaking Cantonese. I am not so familiar with this dialect but I got along fairly well.

We verged into Catholic doctrine. "I am interested to know

just what Catholics believe," he said. "It would be interesting to see where the Communist tenets differ from yours. For instance, I think you believe that your God created the world."

"Yes," I said. "God created the world."

"Communism says that labor created the world," he objected.

"Labor is good, but it must have materials to work with. To some extent, I suppose you could say that labor makes the world we know."

"How can you say that?" he countered. "A man plants rice. He fertilizes the soil. That's labor. Labor grows the rice."

"But if there were no sun there would be no growth," I explained. "The Providence of God enters into the growth of rice. Without sun and rain, all the labor in the world would never produce rice."

"No, no!" he cried, excited. "That's wrong doctrine." He leaned over to me with the most interesting news I had yet heard: "That's why you are here!"

I had known all along, of course, that bullets and opium and even American nationality were not the real causes, but this was the first time the admission had been made.

"Communism promised that China would have freedom of belief," I said. "Can't I believe what I know is true?"

"That's wrong," he stormed. "You have propagated false doctrines. You must be punished."

My heart sank. Even this pleasant man who seemed so reasonable talked of punishment.

"How shall I be punished?" I asked.

"You will sit in prison until you change your mind."

It was not I who answered then. I wanted nothing in the whole world other than a breath of freedom, relief from that horrible prison. Left to myself, I would have given in, I'm sure. But a Spirit stronger than mine answered through my lips.

"Very well, then. I shall sit."

Back I went; out of the pleasant room, away from this cultured man; back to the stifling prison with its stenches and dank stone

corridors, back to the cell to be greeted with a cacophony of raucous laughter.

"We thought you had gone for good!"

"What, not executed yet?"

"Where are all your powerful American friends? Can't they get you out now?"

I didn't care. Joy flooded my soul. It is good to suffer for the Faith. I said the words over and over again, relishing the savor: "That's why I'm here!"

With a light heart, I picked up my shoulder pole and buckets and went off to work.

Nonetheless, the sobering thought knocked at my mind's door. "What's going to happen, now? I had had my chance and deliberately muffed it. How will the pleasant man reward me for wasting his afternoon?"

Two days later, our cell door clanged early in the morning and a soldier called my number. "Get your things together," he said.

His manner and words were just the same as when I had moved from the upstairs cell. Wearily, I gathered my prisoner's paraphernalia—bowl, chopsticks, quilt (how dirty it was by now) and the clothes not then on my back. Where to, now? At least, it could not be worse than this.

"You won't need those," the soldier said with a hint of a smile, as he indicated bowl and chopsticks. I gave them to the mother of the baby. She hid the baby from sight as I approached. She always did that for she, like the others, really believed that Catholic Sisters harm children, so thoroughly was she steeped in propaganda. But she silently accepted the gift.

I followed the guard. We went up the stairs, down the main corridor, through the door connecting the prison with the front offices, and along a nice wooden floor, lit by light, real sunlight. Through another door, and I was standing in warm sunshine in the prison yard!

"Stay here," the guard said and walked off a little.

I was content to close my eyes against the brightness and to

soak in the good sunshine through my thin dress. It was heaven to feel it warm my shoulders and back, to let it penetrate straight into my painful chest.

"You can open your eyes now, Sister!" a familiar voice said. I looked straight into the face of the Bishop. Beside him was Father Zeller. They were both very thin.

"Where are we going?" I asked breathlessly.

"To Hong Kong, I think," Father replied.

It couldn't be true! But it was. We were taken into the inspector's office to hear our sentence. Solemnly pronounced, it was: "Because you have used Hong Kong currency, and because your passports have expired, you are therefore sentenced to return to America." That was all. Not a word about espionage or radios, or guns or opium!

A rather nice guard who spoke English took us over. Father Zeller called him "Joe English." He and his companion put us into a jeep and off we went to the railroad station. Then we boarded a train and in a few hours were at the famous border between Red China and the British colony of Hong Kong.

In former times, the trains between Hong Kong and Canton ran freely, every couple of hours, almost as do those between Philadelphia and New York. There was no great fuss at the border; customs men came aboard and looked at one's passport. That was all.

But now the train stops a couple of hundred feet from a short railroad trestle which marks the boundry. Every passenger gets off and goes through a most minute inspection both of his baggage and of his person. Then, after everyone has been inspected (and this takes several hours) the barbed-wire gates are opened. The refugees walk across the trestle to the point where the Hong Kong police are waiting.

A crowd of very efficient inspectors were going through the long lines of baggage. Without a word to anyone, they pulled open the suitcases, unlocked the bags, and untied the bundles.

Perfectly blank faces said either, "All right, lock it up," or "Better bring that bundle to the chief."

It did not take long for the inspector to check my worldly goods. His face had been as stony as that of the others. How surprising then to hear him say as he bent over my wretched little package, "Don't worry, Sister. You will come back." I didn't believe my ears at first. "Thank you. God bless you!" I answered. He rose, motioned me to close up the baggage again, and moved on to the next without changing a muscle.

I began now to worry about my passport. Formerly, the Hong Kong police had been sticklers for passports in perfect order. Even in the best of times, one had to report at the police office within forty-eight hours of landing in Hong Kong. Heaven and King George help you if a minute lapsed without a passport renewal! And here I was, not only two years out of date but even without the original passport! I began to doubt that, even if Red China did want to put me out, Hong Kong would be willing to take me in.

Maryknoll Sisters were well known in Hong Kong, of course, but who would ever take me for a Maryknoll Sister?

It was foolish, the last of the warped fears one gets into in prison life, but even the Bishop and Father could not quite relieve me.

At last, the barbed-wire gates opened. Like everybody else, we picked up our luggage and started toward them.

Joe English and two or three guards came with us. We walked to the gate. There the soldiers stopped.

I stopped, too, out of sheer habit, I guess. I looked up at them. There was no flicker of expression on those hard faces. Then Joe English waved me on. I ran a little to catch up with the Bishop and Father.

Just a step or two farther on, Father stumbled against a railroad tie and fell. He picked himself up and ruefully brushed off his legs.

"Thus do I come to freedom!" he said.

We walked across the short trestle. This is the No Man's Land between the free world and the slave world. Each step brought us nearer to the smartly uniformed Hong Kong police. I went up to one of them.

"I'm a Maryknoll Sister," I said hurriedly. "I know I don't look like one and I don't have a passport. But if you will let me go to Maryknoll School in Kowloon, the Sisters will identify me."

He smiled a sort of slow, lazy smile.

"You don't need a passport, Sister," he said. "Your face is passport enough."

I smiled my gratitude. Then I looked back across the trestle. Joe English and the guards were still there. They had not moved.

I waved good-by. Was there a slight relaxing of their stern faces? I could not tell, but I waved again. Good-by! God be with you! May He show you the beauty of His truth and warm you with the love of His Sacred Heart. And when you have known and loved Him, may we meet merrily in heaven!

God is good!

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Mary Victoria Sister
Nun in Red China

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